



When Learning Feels Hard

Understanding learning disabilities and how parents can help

WHAT IS A LEARNING DISABILITY?

A lifelong difference in how the brain takes in, processes or expresses information. It affects specific skills such as reading (**dyslexia**), writing (**dysgraphia**) or maths (**dyscalculia**), even with good teaching and real effort. You may also hear "specific learning difficulty" (SpLD).

Specific: certain skills, not overall intelligence

Persistent: continues despite good teaching

Lifelong: with the right support, children thrive

Not: laziness, poor parenting or low intelligence

A child can be bright and still find reading hard. Struggling is not the same as not trying.

Signs to Watch For

Ages 3 to 5

- Trouble learning rhymes and letter names
- Struggles to follow two- or three-step directions
- Difficulty counting or recognising numbers

Ages 5 to 8

- Slow to link letters and sounds; guesses from pictures
- Spelling does not match the sounds
- Maths facts do not stick; tires quickly when writing

Ages 9 to 14

- Reads slowly and avoids reading
- Written work much weaker than spoken ideas
- Says "I'm stupid" or avoids school

One sign alone is not a cause for alarm. Look for a pattern that lasts.

When to Ask for an Assessment

- Struggles continue despite extra help over several months
- The gap with classmates is growing
- What they can say is far ahead of what they can read, write or calculate
- It is affecting confidence, behaviour or wellbeing

Behaviour is communication. Clowning, meltdowns or "not trying" can be a child avoiding being seen to struggle.

Helping at Home

Reading

Read aloud daily, use audiobooks, take turns reading a page each.

Writing

Say it before writing it; try speech-to-text and pencil grips.

Maths

Use coins and beans; count while cooking and shopping.

Homework

Short chunks, a calm place, and stop before the tears.

Protect confidence. Name it kindly and praise effort:
"You tried a new way to work that out."

Questions to Ask the Teacher

1. How is my child doing compared with what is expected?
2. What have you tried, and what has helped?
3. Who in the school supports children with learning needs?
4. Would an assessment be helpful?
5. How can I support at home what you do in class?



The full companion page
practice.learnandleadltd.com/learning

Where do I start?

1 Watch

Write down what you see, when, and how often.

2 Talk

Ask the teacher if they see the same pattern.

3 Rule out

Check vision and hearing; see the doctor.

4 Ask

Request a referral for an assessment.

5 Start now

Help at home. No need to wait for a label.