

## Disabilities Cheat Sheet



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# Dyslexia

## In Preschool

- delayed speech
- mixing up the sounds and syllables in long words
- chronic ear infections
- severe reactions to childhood illnesses
- constant confusion of left versus right
- late establishing a dominant hand
- difficulty learning to tie shoes
- trouble memorizing their address, phone number, or alphabet
- can't create words that rhyme
- a close relative with dyslexia

## In elementary school

- dysgraphia (slow, non-automatic handwriting that is difficult to read)
- letter or number reversals continuing past the end of first grade
- extreme difficulty learning cursive
- slow, choppy, inaccurate reading:
  - guesses based on shape or context
  - skips or misreads prepositions
  - ignores suffixes
  - can't sound out unknown words
- terrible spelling
- often can't remember sight words or homonyms
- difficulty telling time with a clock with hands

- trouble with math
  - memorizing multiplication tables
  - memorizing a sequence of steps
  - directionality
- extremely messy bedroom, backpack, and desk
- dreads going to school
  - complains of stomach aches or headaches
  - may have nightmares about school

## In high school (All above symptoms plus the following)

- limited vocabulary
- extremely poor written expression
- large discrepancy between verbal skills and written compositions
- unable to master foreign language
- difficulty in reading printed music
- poor grades in many classes
- may drop out of high school

## In adults (education history similar to above, plus the following)

- slow reader
- may have to read a page 2 or 3 times to understand it
- terrible speller
- difficulty putting thoughts onto paper
- dreads writing memos or letters
- still has difficulty with right versus left
- often gets lost, even in a familiar city
- sometimes confuses b and d, especially when tired or sick

# Autism

## Communication:

- Eyes contact not maintained during a conversation
- Difficulty in grasping normal social expectations even after being taught/trained in these behaviors
- Fear of change due to social expectations changing and difficulty adapting on-the-spur-of-the-moment
- Communication is loud or cryptic
- Communication is irrelevant to conversation
- Talks too much
- Parroting lines from books or movies
- Confusion in reading facial expressions and/or adapting accordingly to changes in facial expressions
- Resistant to change in schedule, in habits, and/or expectations without time to adjust
- Easily upset by what appear to be minor issues (clothes not folded a certain way, sounds that others block out, etc)
- Frequent disappearances to a private, personal place when overwhelmed
- Severe mood swings

## Sensory:

- Discomfort over certain clothing and food textures
- Repetitive movements (both fine motor and gross motor)
- Compulsive need for clothes to all be folded to the same size, put in color order, or laid out in a particular way
- Compulsive need for items to be arranged a particular way
- Overwhelmed by loud noises
- Fixated on one item, toy, thought, etc

# **Auditory Processing**

## **Early Childhood**

Common difficulties include:

- Learning to speak
- Being able to rhyme
- Understanding spoken language
- Separating meaningful sounds from background noise
- Remembering stories or songs
- Staying focused on a person's voice
- Unusual sensitivity to noise
- Confusing similar sounding words
- Slow start to recognizing letter sounds in words (as opposed to alphabet)

## **Elementary Age Checklist**

Common auditory processing problems include:

- Remembering and following spoken directions
- Difficulty with reading, sounding out in early grades or reading comprehension in 3rd grade or higher
- Inattentiveness in class, doing homework or while reading
- Seeming to ignore others when engrossed in a non-speaking activity
- Understanding people who speak quickly or mishearing words of songs on the radio
- Finding the right words to use when talking.

## **Teenagers and Adult Checklist**

Common difficulties related to auditory processing disorder include:

- Talks louder than necessary
- Reading progress stalls and/or reading reluctance develops
- Disappointing performance in high stakes tests, including handling multiple choice questions
- Remembering a list or sequence
- Often needs words or sentences repeated
- Difficulty memorizing information learned by listening
- Interprets words too literally

## ADD/ADHD

The three main characteristics of ADD are:

### Inattention

- difficulty organizing tasks
- difficulty staying on task (quick loss of interest) and maintaining effort
- difficulty with transitions or prioritizing tasks
- problems with misplacing things needed for tasks
- becoming easily distracted by extraneous stimuli
- difficulty remembering daily activities
- focus is primarily on extraneous noises or stimuli
- difficulty in forming complete sentence thoughts in conversations as young children
- writing, speech, and study methods appear disjointed and hard to follow

### Hyperactivity

- experiences minor motor restlessness, such as fidgeting of hands
- has difficulty remaining seated and talks excessively
- has difficulty regulating restlessness to situational demands
- has difficulty channeling physical restlessness in productive directions
- has difficulty listening to others
- becomes easily distracted while reading
- sleeps fewer than the average person or experiences days of insomnia before crashing
- shaking of head or hands or clutching of the head in an effort to still the fast-paced brain

### Impulsiveness

- speaks or acts without considering the consequence
- has difficulty taking turns
- has feelings of being out-of-control, which can result in obsessive compulsive behaviors
- has need for high stimulus activity
- Jumping from one topic of conversation to another at an unusually fast and overwhelming rate

Common complaints of individuals with ADD include the following:

- The sound of pencils on paper in study hall bothers me.
- My mind is always racing.
- I don't know how to organize my locker, my desk, my bedroom, my thoughts, my notes, my life, etc.
- I can't sleep at night.
- Movement outside the window or door is bothering me.

## Resources:

**Dyslexia:** Bright Solutions for Dyslexia  
<http://www.dys-add.com/>

**Autism:** Autism Society  
<http://www.autism-society.org/>

**Auditory Processing Delay:** Gemm Learning  
<http://www.gemmllearning.com/central-auditory-processing-disorder-symptoms.php>

**ADHD:** Virginia Tech  
<http://www.ucc.vt.edu/stdysk/add1.html>