



Learning Difficulties

Special support strategies

- Make allowances for short attention span – not too long on one activity
- Use learning aids that catch their interest – colour, objects, games



Helping them to know left and right

- Put a dot on the hand they write with.
- Make a capital L with the thumb and first finger of the left hand.
- Help them to know that they start writing on the left-hand side of the page.



- Rewards – e.g. favourite toy of activity if they complete a task
- Star charts / Progress charts
- Right time of day
- Set a routine

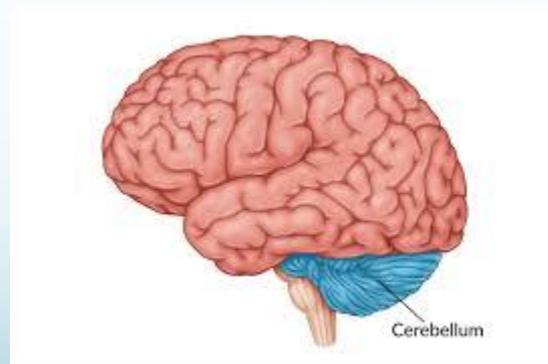
Difficulties in performing language-based tasks

- especially reading, spelling, writing
- difficulties in co-ordination
- reversing letters and words
- **Sometimes called 'dyslexia'. The same support principles apply to A.D.D, A.D.H.D and Autism**

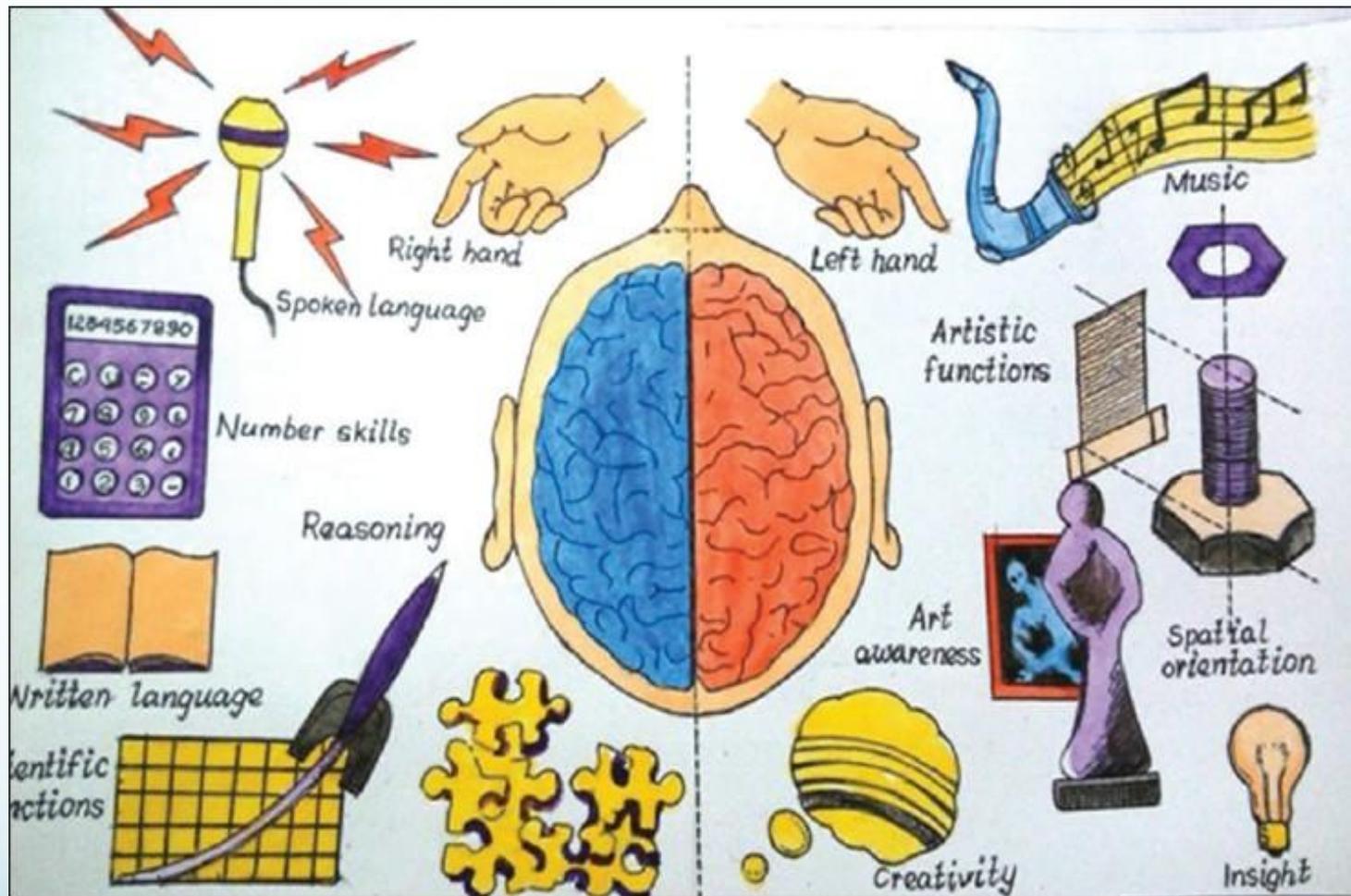
Learning difficulties may be caused by...

*The under development of a certain part of the brain called the **cerebellum**:*

- The part that gives signals to connect the left and right sides of the brain
- The part for balance and coordination

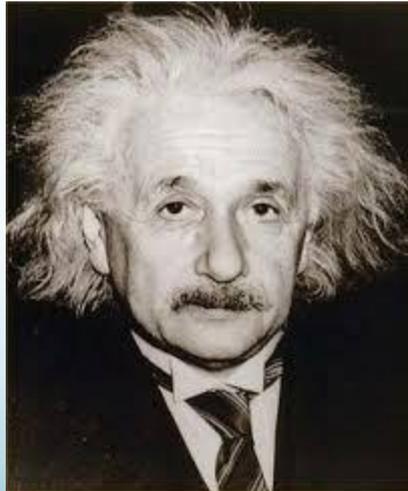


- There can be an imbalance between the right and left sides of the brain.
- **The right side is responsible for creative activities**
- **The left side is responsible for language, mathematics and putting things in order.**
- In some people, the brain has to work much harder because they are trying to use their right side of the brain (the creative side) for the functions of the left side of the brain (language).
- They will become tired.



Positives

- Creativity!
- Many famous people were /are dyslexic
- e.g. Einstein, Leonardo Da Vinci, Steve Jobs



Causes

- Hereditary factors
- Environmental toxins
- Nutrition

Special support

People with learning difficulties will have a greater chance of improving if:

- the problem is identified early (pre-school years)

And if they receive special support in:

- language learning strategies
- nutrition
- exercises for coordination and strengthening the parts of the brain that are weaker.

The pre-school child with learning difficulties

Strengths may be seen in:

- building and construction activities
- creative activities
- problem-solving activities



Weaknesses:

- memory e.g. forgetting instructions
- putting things in the right order, e.g. patterns; letters, numbers
- speech e.g. getting words mixed up

- listening - poor concentration
- physical activities like catching balls
- rhythm – can't clap in time
- trouble knowing left/right
- colour recognition

Students with these difficulties will need more help and additional practice in:

- ball skills
- balancing
- using play equipment
- dance
- songs and rhymes with actions



- stories and listening games
- memory games
- putting things in order
- activities with colours, shapes and patterns
- threading beads, play dough (for small finger muscles)
- sorting and grouping things, e.g. put all the red things together
- holding a pencil

Activity 1

Play a memory game: “I went shopping”.

Person 1: I went shopping and bought a ?

Person 2: I went shopping and bought a ? and a #

Person 3: I went shopping and bought a ? and a # and a * etc

Activity 2

- Play a memory game:
- 5 objects on a tray. Take one away. Which one is missing?

Activity 3

- Listening game: Listen and copy
- Leader makes a series of sounds while partner closes eyes.
- e.g. clap, clap, clap, tap, tap, tap, (with a pen on a table), ting, ting, ting (with a pen on a glass).
- Partner has to copy. Then change the order.

The Primary School child with learning difficulties

Strengths

- reading maps and diagrams
- building, making things, art
- drama

Weaknesses

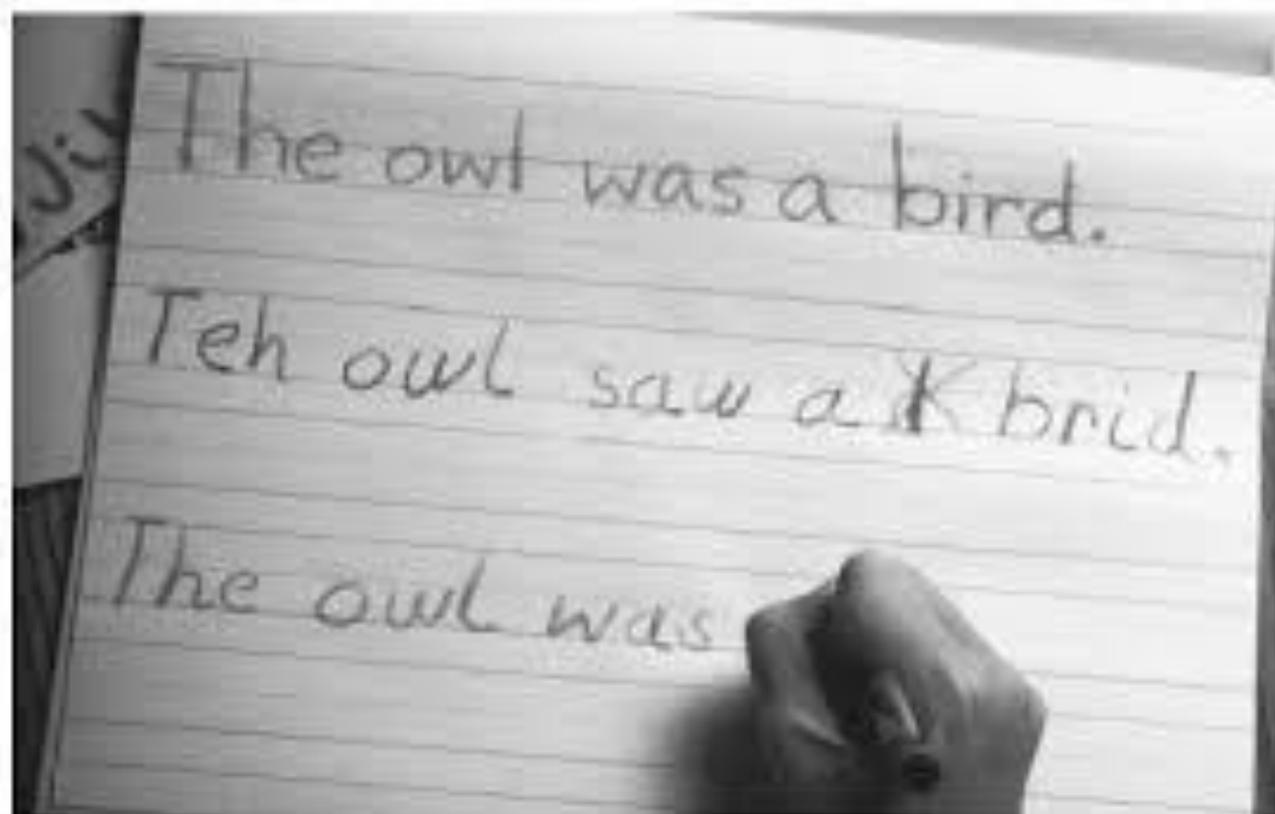
- memory
- concentration
- putting things in order
- following instructions
- remembering information
- literacy

Reading difficulties

- difficulty in recognizing sight words
- problems with phonics
- problems with retelling stories in correct order of events
- difficulties reading aloud – lack of fluency and expression; leaving out words; making up words; pronunciation problems

Spelling difficulties

- reversal of letters (back-to-front)
- wrong use of phonics
- problems identifying individual sounds

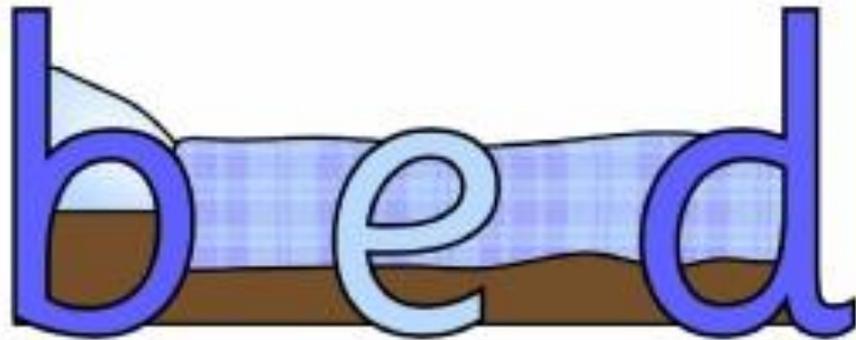


The owl was a bird.

Teh owl saw a K brid.

The owl was

b and **d**



Expressive Writing difficulties

- ideas are jumbled (mixed up)
- words/phrases missed out
- punctuation problems

Handwriting difficulties

- poor muscle control in their fingers
- letters not written correctly, e.g. back-to-front
- write slowly
- messy writing

Problems with focusing on the task

- poor concentration
- poor listening
- doesn't want to read or write
- easily distracted
- think up things to do, to avoid doing what they have to do
- lack confidence

- often tired
- not much work produced
- problems in organizing self and work
- poor self-esteem (how they feel about themselves)
- withdrawn or may be disruptive
- easily upset
- may show difficult behaviour



Behaviour problems

Identify the cause

- Physical problems – tired, hungry, itchy, has a cold, poor eye sight
- Learning problems
- Emotional problems

Dealing with misbehaviour

- By forming strong relationships with the children in your care, they will respect you.
- When they respect you, they will take to heart your words of correction.
- They will not respond to physical or verbal abuse.
- Never discipline out of anger.

Proverbs 15:1

A gentle answer turns away wrath,
but a harsh word stirs up anger.

Questions #1

- Because students with learning difficulties usually have short attention spans, how should this be reflected in our teaching?
- What is a strategy to help students know left from right?
- List four recognised conditions that can cause learning difficulties. (*Hint: Look for conditions such as medical conditions – not possible causes*)
- What is the role of the left side of the brain in learning?

Questions #2

- What is the role of the right side of the brain?
- What happens when the student has a highly developed right side of the brain, but an underdeveloped left side of the brain?
- The right side of the brain controls which hand?
- What are some positive features of a person with a highly developed right side of the brain?

Questions #3

- What are some possible *causes* of language learning difficulties? (*Remember to include language spoken at home.*)
- What are some weaknesses seen in Primary School students with a language learning problem?
- What strengths might these students have?

Activity

- Learn some action rhymes and other activities that help with left-right brain coordination.

Examples of activities

- Pat head and rub stomach
- Ear nose switch
- Ishy wishy (figure 8)
- Pease porridge
- Cross crawl (with one potato)
- Mirror drawing
- Follow the leader
- Bead on a string; walk the string



Peas Porridge (knees, clap, pat, clap)

Pease porridge hot, peas porridge cold,

Pease porridge in the pot

Nine days old.

Some like it hot, some like it cold

Some like it in the pot

Nine days old

Repeat: Knees, clap, cross, cross

One potato

One potato, two potato, three potato four

Five potato, six potato, seven potato more

Eight potato, nine potato, now we're up to ten

Eleven potato, twelve potato, time to start again

(or no time to start again)

Mirror drawing rhyme

I can draw a circle, I can draw a square

I can draw a diamond in the air.

I can draw a tower, I can draw a flower

I can draw a pussy cat sitting on a chair

Ishy wishy

Ishy wishy was a fishy, swish, swish, swish