



# SERVING ADULTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

In a CALP Setting

CALP practitioners are in perfect positions to meet, support, and advocate for adults with learning disabilities. Use this manual to gain a deeper understanding of adults with learning disabilities. Transform your CALP with inclusive program design and delivery.

Karen Plourde  
Nadine Fortier

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## **Serving Learners with Disabilities: In a CALP setting**

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## Acknowledgement



I wish to express my gratitude to all the adults with learning disabilities who trusted me enough to teach me how they learned. The content in this manual is a result of knowledge gained over forty years from these cherished, intrepid adults. I am forever grateful.

Many thanks to Nadine Fortier, an extraordinary computer and programming expert and partner in the development of courses for adults with learning disabilities and this manual. Your patience, skill, and expertise made this document possible.



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To the eagle eyes of the editors with their insightful suggestions and corrections, I thank:

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- My daughter, Beth Plourde Rogers
- My former co-worker and friend, Sheila McKay.

My heartfelt thanks to all of you.

Karen  
Plourde



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## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	4
Part 1.....	5
FLEXIBILITY WITHIN THE CALP GUIDELINES .....	5
Part 2.....	8
ALL THINGS LD (LEARNING DISABILITIES).....	8
Learning Disability Definition and Continuum .....	10
Six Persistent Difficulties .....	12
Learning Disability Accommodations.....	23
Learning Disability Assessment .....	26
Self-Advocacy .....	30
Part 3.....	32
UNIVERSAL PROGRAM DESIGN .....	32
Creating the materials .....	34
Part 4.....	42
UNIVERSAL PROGRAM DELIVERY .....	42
Part 5.....	48
GETTING STARTED WITH MATH, READING, AND WRITING .....	48
Math .....	48
Reading.....	51
Writing.....	60
Part 6.....	69
TECHNOLOGY .....	69
CONCLUSION .....	71

# INTRODUCTION

The Community Adult Learning Program (CALP) is a provincially funded program designed to deliver literacy and foundational learning opportunities to adults in communities across Alberta. As a CALP practitioner, you have already met adults with various educational and cultural backgrounds. Amongst your learners, some will have visible disabilities; others will have hidden disabilities. The marked strengths that allow an adult in your community to excel in so many areas may be overshadowed by marked academic weaknesses that could derail learning efforts.

Dedicated, well-intentioned CALP practitioners' efforts towards academic and personal success for their learners can also be derailed. Well-planned presentations by CALP practitioners can also result in failure if traditional educational practices are applied. The good news is your CALP can and will enjoy academic success with **all** adults you serve, including adults with disabilities.

The focus on serving adults with disabilities is highlighted in Alberta Advanced Education's [CALP Guidelines \(2020\)](#). CALP practitioners, like you, are in the best position to meet, support, and advocate for adults with learning disabilities.

The concentration of this manual is on adults with learning disabilities, with suggestions for inclusive program development and presentation to enhance the success of all learners in your CALP.

To start your journey towards success with your learners, take time to first go through this manual from beginning to end, without opening the “**DEEP DIVE**” links. Then, take the deeper dive by starting over and visiting the listed sites; read as much as possible to increase your knowledge base on each topic. Little is written for adults, so many of the linked resources focus on children. Since learning disabilities are lifelong, you can apply all that you learn to the adults you serve.

## Part 1

### FLEXIBILITY WITHIN THE CALP GUIDELINES

Your CALP has the support of Alberta Advanced Education to develop your **inclusivity** skills, adapt your programs, and meet the needs of adults with disabilities. The CALP Guidelines (2020) outline the background, requirements, and expectations of CALP-funded organizations. The Guidelines specifically identify barriers to adult learning:

*Internal barriers include diagnosed or undiagnosed learning difficulties/disabilities, developmental and/or **cognitive** delays... (p.9)*

Many adults who have undiagnosed learning disabilities did not succeed in the regular school systems. They also did not receive proper support and were pushed from grade to grade with little improvement in their basic reading, writing, and math skills. These adults will enter your CALP as a welcoming space with practitioners who are supportive and prepared to lead learners to mastery of academic subjects. Maybe for the first time, they will learn from programs that are planned to meet their unique learning needs.

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Additional barriers outlined in the CALP Guidelines include:

*...a fear of further stigmatization, and a sense of failure associated with learning. (p.9)*

Adults with learning disabilities, especially those with undiagnosed learning disabilities, suffered years of stigmatization and failure in schools. Your CALP is supported by the Guidelines to change their stigmatization and sense of failure into strength, pride, and accomplishment.

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For CALPs located outside of larger urban areas, it is nearly certain the learning needs of adults with disabilities will not be met by other organizations. The CALP Guidelines stipulate that you should not only provide but also **prioritize** programming in communities where the needs of adult learners are not met.

*The Community Adult Learning Program grant must be **prioritized** towards responding to learning needs that are not already met by other learning providers in the community. Organizations have the flexibility to choose the modes of delivery that will best meet the needs of the community as outlined in section 5.3 [of the Guidelines]. Organizations are encouraged to use innovative and creative approaches. (p.23)*

Put aside fears you may have about creating new programs to meet the needs of your learners. Be bold and brave with creative approaches. Know that Advanced Education supports your efforts.

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Your mandate as explained in the CALP Guidelines clearly encourages the development of programs and supports to meet the diverse needs of learners

*Community-based learning organizations are well-positioned to respond to diverse learning through adaptable programs and supports. (p.4)*

The adults with disabilities who come to you for literacy skills and other supports require adaptable programs and supports that respond to diverse learning needs. Programs adapted to meet and support the needs of all learners, including learners with disabilities, will ensure the success of all.

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In the definition of a foundational learner, the CALP Guidelines identify barriers to learning and clearly state:

*Grant recipients **must** familiarize themselves with the nature of these challenges, discussed in section 5.1: Literacy and Foundational Learning [of the Guidelines]. (p.11)*

This manual will begin your journey of familiarization with the nature of the challenges faced by learners with disabilities.

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The adults with disabilities could take courses in any of your foundational learning categories, including reading, writing, math, and digital skills, but the following section from the CALP Guidelines can be especially helpful when preparing courses for and serving adults with disabilities.

*5.1.3...The skills for learning category is defined in the Community Adult Learning Program Guidelines as learning opportunities that support the development of the fundamental skills and habits of learning that support foundational learners to build confidence, develop an identity as a learner, advocate for themselves, and engage in foundational and other learning. While it may involve practicing a range of foundational skills, the primary intended learning objective of learning opportunities in the skills for learning category is to help learners build the following skills and habits needed to set and achieve their learning goals, be successful in*

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*further learning, and increase confidence in their ability to be a more self-directed, independent learner. These skills and habits include:*

- *Recognizing oneself as a learner*
  - *Taking risks in learning*
  - *Actively engaging in the act of learning*
  - *Developing learning strategies*
  - *Building collaboration skills in learning*
  - *Strengthening communication skills in learning*
- (pp.27–28)

Imagine the possibilities for skill development in what is outlined in just this category!

Here are a few sites to consider for course development in the Skills For Learning category for your CALP:

- [Learning Strategies](#) (LD Online)
- [Active Learning Strategies](#) (Queen’s University, Teaching for Effective Learning)
- [Instructional Strategies](#) (Alberta Learning)
- [Time Management Tips for Adults with ADHD](#) (Verywell Mind)
- [18 Time Management Apps](#) (HubSpot)



You can be a leader in your community in serving adults who may otherwise receive little support, have few opportunities to be included in their community, and have no other opportunity to improve foundational skills. For the adult with a **learning disability**, your CALP may provide the opportunity to discover their undiagnosed, hidden learning disability.

Use this manual as a guide toward inclusivity for your CALP.

Build your capacity to make inclusion successful and practical.



## Part 2

### ALL THINGS LD (LEARNING DISABILITIES)

#### Your CALP – A Welcoming Place for Adults with Learning Disabilities

To welcome adults with learning disabilities, start by preparing your CALP setting. Decorate your walls with the many famous people with learning disabilities, like Cher. There are many who have self-identified as having learning disabilities, like **dyslexia** and/or attention **deficit** disorder (ADD).



Cher  
Learning Disability  
"I cannot write a check."

(Image credit:  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cher>)

To make your CALP learning disability friendly:

- Buy posters of famous adults with learning disabilities, identify their learning disabilities, and find personal quotes about how they struggled in specific ways.
- Display this within your CALP as a "Walk of Fame" wall of adults with learning disabilities.
- Make a binder of famous adults with learning disabilities including write-ups of their many accomplishments.

Sites to help get you started:

- [List of famous adults with learning disabilities](#)
- [Images of famous adults with learning disabilities](#)

You can also make your CALP ready with a collection of videos by adults with learning disabilities that can be shared with your learners:

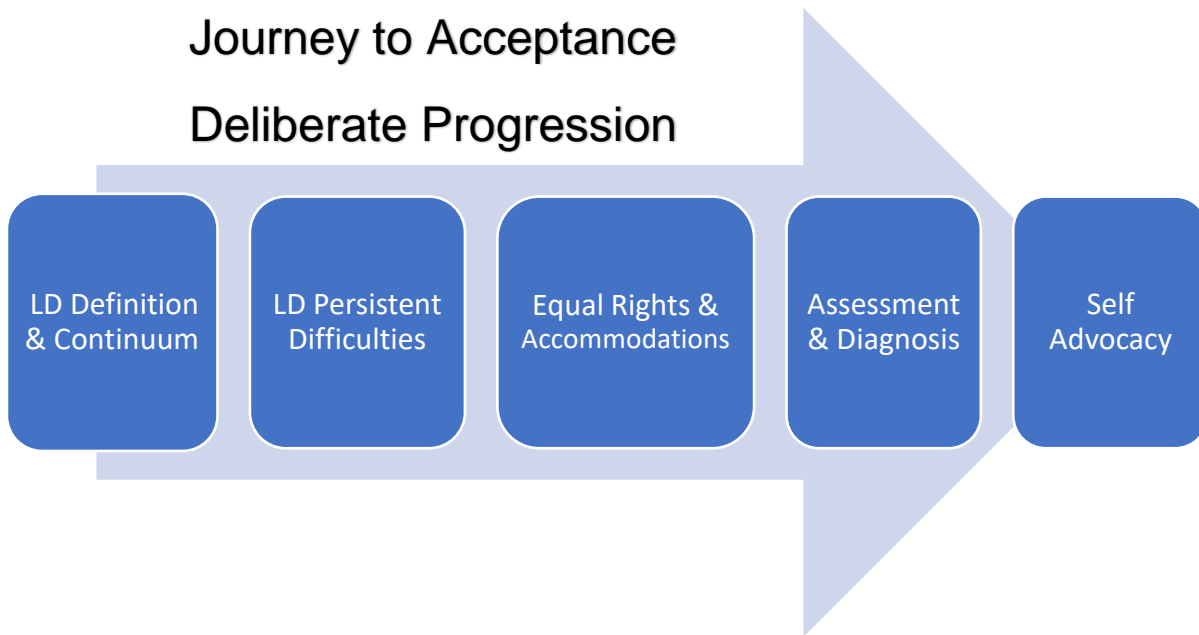
- [Katherine](#) (My Struggle with Learning Disabilities and How to Deal with Them)
- [Several Adults Speak](#) (about what having a learning disability means to them)
- [Blair](#) (How My Diagnosis Improved my College Experience)

## Deliberate Progression Toward Formal Assessment

If the adults you serve do not identify post-secondary education as a goal, there is no need to introduce them to a psychoeducational assessment. But if attending post-secondary is a goal, use this manual to lead your learner through the six steps of discovery in the diagram below.

This journey includes the goal of acquiring a formal assessment, being diagnosed with a learning disability, and acquiring accommodations in the post-secondary setting to ensure access to an equal education. Use all the topics presented in this manual to inspire the post-secondary bound learner's journey through the steps of discovery, understanding, acceptance, and power in the diagnosis of a learning disability.

Each step in the deliberate progression is fully explained for you. So, keep reading!



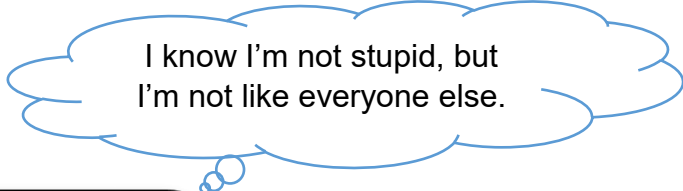
You may have to juggle the presentation of the topics, waiting for the appropriate opportunity. **Use all the information in Part 2 to lead your learner through the process of discovery to self-advocacy.** In most cases, a hurried approach is unnecessary. How to start a conversation or work in comments that lead the learner to a discussion on any one of the topics will depend on opportunities that make the inclusion of the topic a natural progression. Rely on your judgement.



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➔ Learning Disability Definition and **Continuum**

Adults born and raised in Canada who attended Canadian schools but still struggle with literacy skills are likely adults with undiagnosed learning disabilities who were not properly served in childhood. Only children with the most assertive, educated, and tireless parents obtain formal assessments; few children with learning disabilities are diagnosed formally in school.



I know I'm not stupid, but I'm not like everyone else.



As a result, most who need diagnosis and support fall through the educational support cracks and use their personality to hide, slide, cheat, and cajole their way through school; they are passed on from one grade to the next without learning to read, write, or do math. When they end up in your CALP, they already know they are different from their peers, but they do not know why.

**Definitions:**

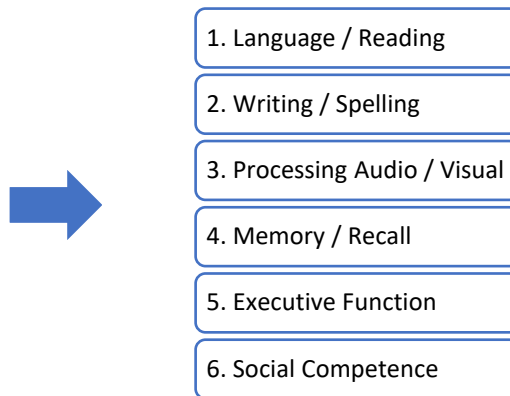
The definition of learning disability varies somewhat. Review the definitions found on these two sites:

- [Learning Disabilities Association of Canada](#) (LDAC)
- [Learning Disabilities Association of America](#) (LDAA)

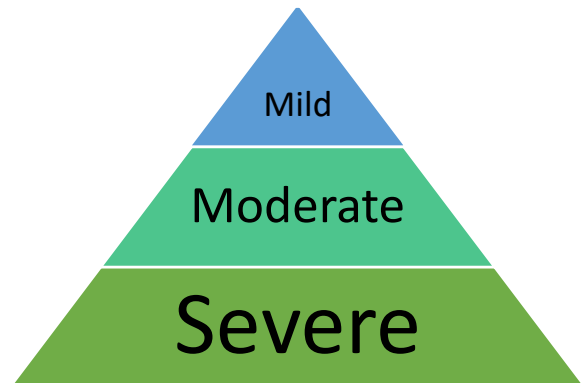
Definitions of learning disability are influenced by financial considerations of educational institutions. It costs about \$2,000 CDN for an assessment. Consider then how school divisions in the USA that are bound by law to serve children with disabilities might struggle to afford testing with non-existent dollars. Canadian provinces are in a similar situation. As a result, states and provinces become creative and tweak the definitions to cope with an unaccounted expense against financial realities.

The most important elements in the definition of learning disability are:

- **Average or above average intelligence, not a global intellectual deficiency.**
  - Average intelligence score is 100.
  - Nearly 70% of all people score plus or minus 15 points of the average score.
- **Persistent difficulty** in any one or any combination of the following:



- Any of the persistent difficulties above are on a **continuum** from mild to severe.



- Learning disabilities are life-long and are **neurobiological** and/or **genetic** in origin.



## Learning Disability Persistent Difficulties



Learning disabilities can be confounding.

Even though adults may have average or above average IQ and may read and write very well, they may be unable to master the basic times tables. Others, who can do all the academic subjects, will be unable to organize their materials, hand in assignments on time, or show up for appointments. An adult may know the meaning and the value of 375,428 but be unable to

add  $39 + 68$ . Some could have a strong command of high-level vocabulary and wonderful speaking skills but may not be able to spell at all. Many adults with learning disabilities who cannot spell, however, are able to select the correct word from an electronic spellcheck list.

You will encounter adults who struggle with difficulties that have been constant in their life and will continue to exist. The persistent difficulties presented in this manual are organized and combined into six categories to inform your understanding of learning disabilities and your provision of accommodations.

The vocabulary used to discuss persistent learning difficulties contains language which is unusual in CALP practice. Words like “weakness” and “deficit” appear frequently in the descriptions and lists of characteristics. The use of these descriptive words, along with the lists of weaknesses, deficits, and difficulties, is intentional. This vocabulary is part of the professional language within the field of education. The specificity of the terms is included here to help you become more fully informed about the complexities of learning disabilities and their impacts on adults. The language included will help you prepare the adult for the assessment process and results.

Adults with learning disabilities need to become their own advocates in everyday life, including post-secondary education and employment. To accomplish the goal of self-advocacy, the learner must fully understand their strengths and weaknesses and the complexity of their learning disability. As well, they must appreciate the impact on academic and workplace performance and identify accommodations that can support their success.

The descriptions of the six persistent difficulties will also help you advocate for funding for assessments and advocate for accommodations. When you write letters of advocacy, include the phrases that describe the characteristics of your learner. Your recognition of your learner’s strengths and the weakness will inform your interactions as you proceed to develop strategies that support their acquisition of knowledge and skills.

Find opportunities with your learner to discuss the persistent difficulties that are part of learning disabilities. Use the descriptions of persistent difficulties to provide an overview or discuss specific difficulties you noticed that pertain to your learner. Focus on areas your learner may easily confirm as difficult. If you have prepared a learning disability binder or PowerPoint, you can skip through the items that do not apply to your learner.



## 1. Language / Reading

Learning disabilities are not just about reading difficulty. Understanding and/or expressing language, both oral and written, often accompany reading difficulty. As you listen carefully, you may note **linguistic** clues like:

### **Reversed statements**

Out of the clear = In the clear

In the dark = in the red

Out of the world = Out of the blue

### **Mispronunciations**

Newvember = November

Optober = October

Califora = California

Compy=Company

Coparation = corporation

Vietmanese = Vietnamese

Without the knowledge of word definitions or correct spelling, adults will often also misunderstand common phrases or names such as:

- To be pacific (instead of to be specific)
- An escape goat (instead of a scapegoat)
- Cold slaw (instead of coleslaw)
- A doggie-dog world (instead of dog-eat-dog world)
- One in the same (instead of one and the same)
- Statue of limitations (instead of statute of limitations).

### Statute of Limitations

Play this video: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/XrKb2TTy2ik?>



Adults with reading difficulties experience difficulties in phonemic and **phonological** awareness. This impacts the ability to hear and identify the sound structure of spoken words, including its syllables, beginning sounds, and end sounds. Short-term memory difficulty adds to the reading struggle. Another way to speak of this kind of reading difficulty is to call it dyslexia. Adults with dyslexia struggle with word recognition, **decoding**, and spelling. Difficulty with **phonetic decoding** is the hallmark of dyslexia.

Most struggling readers will not be able to decode (sound out) the words despite years of trying. Teachers of reading will all know the famous 315 Dolch Sight Words. They find ingenious ways to cement learning of sight words and **phonics** with children, and the children **without** disabilities can learn the words and sounds that carry little to no meaning. For the child with learning disabilities, however, phonics and sight word acquisition is a painful, long, arduous process resulting in poor results. Your adult learner may have experienced this method with parents, grandparents, teachers, and tutors, and as an adult, tried other phonics-based programs with little success. Unfortunately, the use of phonics for remediation targets the inherent weaknesses of the adult learner. As a result, the adult likely experienced years of repeated failures, eroded self-esteem, and learned helplessness. Sometimes, CALP providers continue to use phonics because they are accomplished at delivering phonics and are unaware they are adding to the agony. The temptation is to go with what they know.

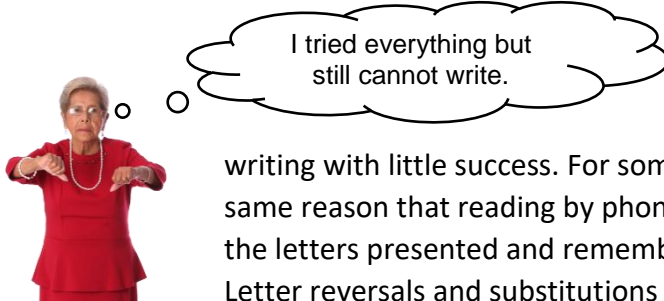


### DEEP DIVE – Language and Reading:

- [Dyslexia Basics](#) (LD Online)

## 2. Writing / Spelling

Adults with language/reading difficulties often struggle with all aspects of writing. They cannot express their thoughts if they cannot spell words. Even holding a pencil or pen may be difficult. So much more can hinder progress, including memory difficulties (explored later in this manual).



Adults may have tried for years to master writing with little success. For some, attempts at learning to spell failed for the same reason that reading by phonics failed; they could not associate sounds to the letters presented and remember the many combination possibilities.

Letter reversals and substitutions of same-shaped letters add to the difficulty.

Short-term memory weaknesses make all components of spelling, including remembering the order of letters, spelling rules, and sounds of letters, more difficult. Writing becomes an exhausting, frustrating process. In spite of great effort, the written work may be unreadable.

Adults with language/reading disabilities that impact writing may

- Be unable to write at all (writing freeze)
- Produce written work where most of the words are misspelled
- Misuse words (wrong meaning)
- Be unable to write on the lines / letters and words are unevenly spaced
- Experience pain when writing
- Reverse letters and words
- Miss vital words in a sentence
- Have upper and lower case letters used inconsistently
- Hate/fear writing
- Be unable to read their own writing

### DEEP DIVE – Writing and Spelling:

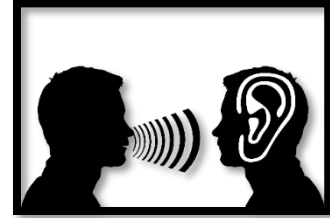
- [What is Dysgraphia?](#) (ADDitude)
- [What is dysgraphia?](#) (Understood)
- [Understanding Dysgraphia](#) (International Dyslexia Association)



### 3. Processing Audio / Visual

#### **Auditory processing disability (APD)**

Adults with APD have a hard time understanding and interpreting the meaning of what they hear, resulting in miscommunications. Hearing what is said with APD is like trying to listen to someone in a loud bar and only hearing bits and pieces.



Adults with APD may experience difficulty with

- Following multi-step directions
- Understanding accented speech
- Discerning a change in verbal tone
- Locating the source of the sound
- Following directions
- Writing and spelling

#### Central Auditory Processing Disorder (CAPD)

Play this video: [https://www.youtube.com/embed/6bGV\\_z44kh4?](https://www.youtube.com/embed/6bGV_z44kh4?)



#### **DEEP DIVE – Processing Audio (APD):**

- [What does Auditory Processing Disorder look like in adults?](#) (ADDitude)
- [Auditory Processing Disorder in Adults](#) (Verywell Health)
- [Auditory processing disorder](#) (LD Online)

**Visual processing disabilities (VPD)**

Adults with VPD struggle to interpret and process information taken in through the eyes. This is not the same as sharpness of vision. Visual processing involves spatial relations, visual discrimination, visual closure, object recognition, and whole/part relationships. In adults with VPD, spatial deficits are pronounced; their perception of one object in relation to the placement of another object is not accurate. This deficit is critical in math, reading, writing, and driving.



Adults with VPD may experience difficulties with

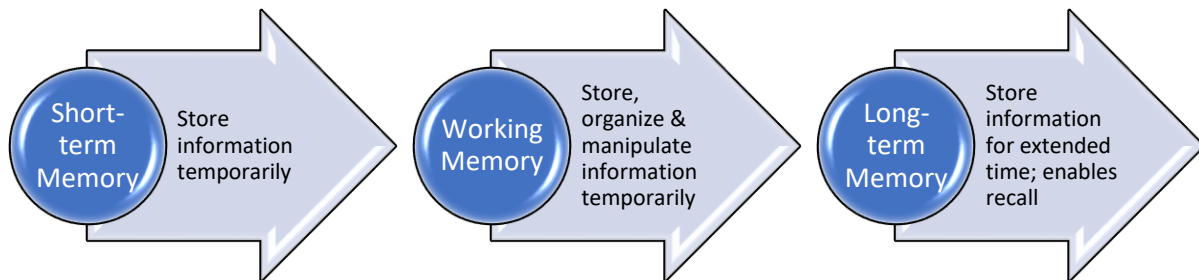
- Keeping place while reading (skip words), and blurred vision or headaches during or after reading
- Estimation of size, shape, and distance, affecting reading maps, charts, and graphs
- Seeing the details or the whole picture, and finding one item among many
- Sense of direction, learning how to drive, and becoming lost in new environments
- Sense of space, resulting in bumping into walls and objects
- Estimating time and how long a task takes
- Organizing

**DEEP DIVE – Processing Visual (VPD):**

- [Visual processing disorder](#) (LD Online)
- [What is Visual Processing Disorder?](#) (Churchill Center and School)
- [Adults with Visual-Spatial Learning Disabilities](#) (Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario)

#### 4. Memory / Recall

Adults with learning disabilities can be impacted by memory difficulties. Understanding memory types and the impacts of deficits can help identify an individual's memory difficulties and determine best presentation practices to accommodate them.



Basic memory types:

- Short-term memory refers to the temporary storage of information.
- Working memory refers to the processes that are used to temporarily store, organize, and manipulate information while the brain is busy with another task.
- Long-term memory refers to the storage of information for extended periods of time to have it available for recall when required later.

Adults with memory deficits may experience difficulty with

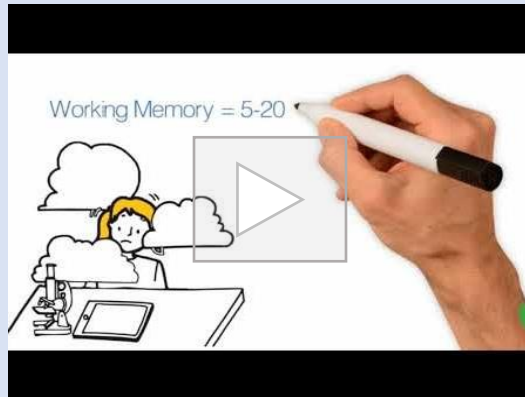
- Remembering a question long enough to create an answer
- Remembering multiple step directions
- Performing mental arithmetic and complex reasoning
- Planning and organizing
- Applying previous learning to a new situation
- Maintaining concentration on a task
- Maintaining positive self-esteem and relationships with peers
- Following conversations in a group

The implications of memory deficits can include

- *In Reading* – trouble linking memories to meaning and pronunciation of words, **reading comprehension**/fluency, and remembering what was read.
- *In Writing* – holding the sequences of sounds for spelling, composing, holding ideas, and connecting the ideas in written compositions.
- *In Math* – errors in translating numbers from verbal to written form, and most importantly, inability to retrieve number combinations and facts from long-term memory. Complex mathematical problems are hampered due to a lack of working memory. Automatic retrieval of basic math facts is not present.

## How Memory Works

Play this video: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/4tfh7vs0Mlc?>



### DEEP DIVE – Memory / Recall:

- [What is Short-Term Memory?](#) (Very Well Mind)
- [Working Memory: The Engine for Learning](#) (International Dyslexia Association)
- [Understanding Working Memory and Learning Disabilities](#) (LD@school)

## 5. Executive Function

Broadly speaking, executive function refers to the cognitive and mental abilities that help individuals engage in goal-directed action. Executive function directs our actions, controls behavior, and motivates us to achieve our goals and prepare for future events. Executive function involves working memory, flexible thinking, and self-control.

Adults with weak executive function may experience difficulty with

- Thinking about doing more than one thing at a time
- Gathering the right items for preparedness
- Following directions
- Organizing and planning
- Keeping track
- Focus and self-control

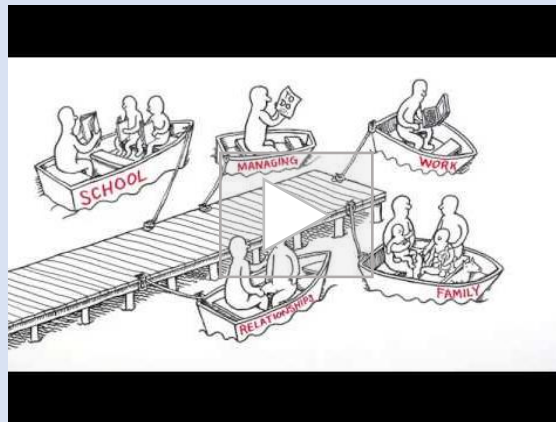


Weaknesses in executive function can lead to an overall inability to follow through with short-term and long-term goals. Often, adult learners may be unable to

complete assignments, show up for tutoring appointments, and meet at scheduled times. Without addressing problems associated with weak executive function, they may languish with inaction.

### Building Core Capabilities

Play this video: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/6NehuwDA45Q?>



Executive function skills are not innate, but they can be acquired. Individuals may not have learned these skills at home or in school. Yet everyone has the capacity to develop and improve executive function skills over time with practice.

When, in your interactions, you detect that an adult learner is weak in executive function skills, treat it with the same seriousness that you would treat their struggles with a particular academic subject.

Your CALP can offer tutoring, provide learning opportunities, or develop courses that support and **explicitly** teach the skills adults need to succeed in learning. Success in managing executive function weaknesses will enable greater success in academic literacy skills. Executive function skills, like planning and time management to schedule daily and weekly responsibilities, as well as organizational skills, task initiation, home orderliness, will help your learner succeed in their academics. Executive function skills will help the adult maintain self-control, flexibility, and perseverance in handling difficult decisions every day. Explicitly teach what it means to be organized. Skills, like how to organize a binder and creating a calendar specific for academics, or specific for medical appointments or other categories that fit the adult's life, can be taught in your CALP.

Consider all the executive function skills that someone would need to succeed in academics, such as attention needed to focus on lessons or organization to keep all materials in order. They would also need to self-initiate in order to finish homework assignments, study, as well as plan

and execute longer-term assignments. Importantly, they would have to persevere through any and all struggles to completion.

Improving executive function skills will strengthen all academic skills and will become an asset in the work environment as well. Executive function skills will provide the building blocks needed to be successful from the start, so be sure to find the time to impart these skills and allow the time for the adult to practice the skills they learn.

### Managing Executive Function

Play this video: <https://vimeo.com/678272071/a8f8696793>  
Video Transcript: <https://calp.ca/uploads/621e8c7927213.pdf>

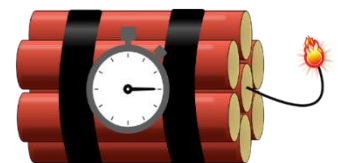


### DEEP DIVE – Executive Function:

- [What is Executive Function?](#) (ADDitude)
- [What is executive function?](#) (Understood)
- [Executive Function Fact Sheet](#) (LD Online)
- [Executive Function Problems](#) (DyslexiaHelp)

## 6. Social Competence

Many adults who have learning disabilities do not struggle with social relationships, but for some, there can be the concealed threat of a 'social interaction time bomb'. For those who struggle with social competence, inappropriate social interactions and responses may trigger rejection, **ostracization**, and tumultuous relationships with families, friends, and spouses.



*Social Interaction Time Bomb*

Social skill deficits are more prevalent with adults who are on the severe end of the learning disability spectrum with severe language deficits and with **hyperactivity**.

Information for assisting adults with social interaction is limited. When you explore the **DEEP DIVE** sites, choose what is fitting for your adult learner.

Signs of social competence difficulties include

- **Voice modulation** (the ability to adjust voice tone and volume)
- Continuous talking with no end to a conversation
- Standing too close when talking – literally face-to-face
- Inability to understand body language and jokes
- Difficulty understanding inferences and sarcasm
- Poor social interaction navigation
- Depression and low self-esteem
- Low tolerance for failure
- Social isolation.

Check out this humorous take on inability to make friends and interpret social cues.

#### The Big Bang Theory - Sheldon Cooper's View on Social Skills

Play this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=htzgLnD2F78>



#### **DEEP DIVE – Social Competence:**

- [Social Competence...with Learning Disabilities](#) (LD Online)
- [Social Skills and LDs](#) (Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario)
- [Social Skill Training...with Learning Disabilities](#) (LD@school)



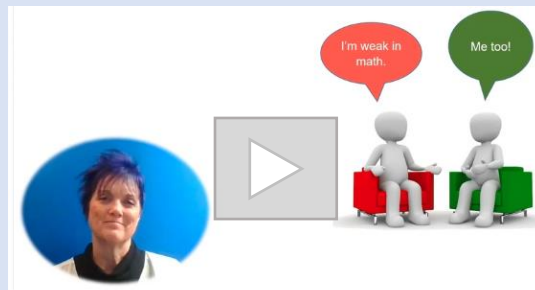
## Learning Disability Equal Rights and Accommodations



Foundational skills are not exclusive to reading, writing, and math; they can also include how to successfully use accommodations. Find opportunities to discuss the accommodations that are part of the provision of an equal education. Use the information in this section as you juggle how and when to introduce the topics. In your deliberate progression, provide your adult learner with a complete understanding about accommodations – what they are, why they are given, and their relationship to equal access – as a crucial step in the acceptance of a formal assessment.

### Conversation Starters

Play this video: <https://vimeo.com/678272266/8ebb157fa1>  
Video Transcript: [https://calp.ca/\\_uploads/621e8ca63f443.pdf](https://calp.ca/_uploads/621e8ca63f443.pdf)



### Conversation Starters

When the right opportunity presents itself, initiate a discussion of all available accommodations. Accommodations are part of providing an equal access to education. Adults with learning disabilities have a right to an inclusive education, based on equal access and without discrimination. Providing **equal education** to adults with disabilities includes program development, program delivery, and the provision of accommodations.



Accommodations are changes that

- Make it possible for adults with learning disabilities to demonstrate their skill/knowledge without being penalized for their disability
- Remove barriers for adults with learning disabilities, including the way tasks are presented



Accommodations are not designed to give the learner an advantage over others nor to weaken academic rigor.

Society has long granted accommodations to people with disabilities.



We do not expect people with vision impairments to struggle without glasses. Children and adults are accommodated in educational institutions by the provision of wearing glasses to assist vision.

- **Glasses are an accommodation.**



Another example is the use of a wheelchair for people who are unable to walk into an educational institution. We do not expect people with no legs or paralysis to crawl into the classroom.

- **Wheelchairs are an accommodation.**



Finally, after years of advocacy through the 1900s, individuals who are Deaf are provided with ASL interpreters. We no longer demand that students with deafness struggle in education without interpreters.

- **Interpreters are an accommodation.**

## Brief history of accommodations for learning disabilities

The provision of accommodations for children and adults with learning disabilities has not come easily. Equality has been denied. In the 1880s, the term dyslexia was introduced but not commonly used until the 1930s. In the 1960-70s, associations for children with learning disabilities began. Parental advocacy was responsible for the development of inclusive education for children with disabilities. The trend towards equality finally spread to adult education in the 1980s. Institutions explored strategies for academic success. Accommodations were introduced for adult learners with learning disabilities.

Over the next forty years, inclusivity and equality evolved to a higher state, with still more room for improvement. Currently, post-secondary accommodations are offered routinely to adults with learning disabilities with formal assessments. Your adult learner may be surprised by this fact.

We can all celebrate now that CALPs are positioned to afford adult learners with disabilities equal opportunities to obtain the same result, to gain the same benefit, or to reach the same level of achievement as learners without disabilities. Your CALP has the freedom to shift the paradigm.

## Accommodations Alberta

In Alberta, all post-secondary institutions have support service offices. Adults who are formally assessed as having a learning disability can work with support personnel to arrange for accommodations. If your learner plans to take a General Educational Development (GED) test and

has a learning disability, your CALP can send an advocacy letter to the Alberta GED department; they will provide accommodations, even if there is no formal evaluation that provides a diagnosis of a learning disability.

Common accommodations in post-secondary and in your CALP can include

- Note Taking (lecture notes provided by course instructor)
- Reader for exams (all test questions read to learner); Audiobooks (for course content)
- Scribe for all computerized tests with fill in circles
- Scribe for learners not fluent with voice recognition programs (for course assignments)
- Computer for all written work
- Audio Recorder for lectures
- Calculator for all math calculations
- Quiet Space for all exams
- Double Time for all exams

Over the years, accommodation types have grown to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities, including changes to presentation, course delivery, and exams. Learning more about all accommodations will help you recognize and meet the needs of the adult learners in your CALP.

**DEEP DIVE – Learning Disability Equal Rights and Accommodations:**

These sites are mostly discussing children but can be applied to adults. As you dig deeper, you may discover additional accommodations appropriate for the adults you serve.

- [Accommodations for Students with LD](#) (LD Online)
- [Accommodations](#) (Alberta Education)
- [Classroom Accommodations for Visual Processing Issues](#) (Understood)
- [Duty to Accommodate...in post-secondary education](#) (Alberta Human Rights Commission)



## Learning Disability Assessment and Diagnosis



Leading the learner to acceptance of a formal assessment is best achieved when the benefits of formal assessments are accentuated. Cultivate strength in the knowledge learned about ALL THINGS LD. Discuss fears of being diagnosed.

### Who should be formally assessed?

Any learner with a suspected learning disability, who aspires to post-secondary education, should be referred for a formal assessment.



Formal or informal assessments can help you understand your learner's weaknesses, strengths, background, and **cumulative** struggles. You will find practical information about formal assessments and referrals in this resource:

- [Rising to the Reading Challenges of Adult Learners: Practitioner's Toolkit](#) (CanLearn Society)

**Informal Assessments:** You can develop protocols that will help you informally assess learners. Over time, armed with the information in this manual, you will develop a sense for commonalities that are reliable indicators of the presence of a learning disability. As you become more skilled at recognizing the six persistent difficulties, you may not need a checklist for identification. But if you do, learning disability checklists are available on the following sites:

- [Learning Disability Screen](#) (British Columbia StudentAid BC)
- [LD Checklist of Indicators for adults](#) (Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario)

**Formal Assessments:** Acquiring the designation of a learning disability by formal assessment will be crucial for the adult continuing on to post-secondary education. This is because accommodations in post-secondary are reserved for students with confirmation of a learning disability. The required confirmation is provided by a psychologist who administers a psychoeducational assessment and writes a diagnostic report on the results.

With the information contained in this manual, you will be more informed and better able than most in your community to lead the adult to acceptance of a formal assessment. As a practitioner, you may not get everything right with the first learner. Fear not! As you work with each learner, your expertise will improve, and you will shine in your role. The confidence you help develop and the success you witness will bring enormous satisfaction to both your learners and yourself.

## Advocate for the formal assessment

*Nothing is impossible in this world.  
Firm determination, it is said, can move heaven and earth.*  
Tsunetomo Yamamoto

Access to funding for a formal assessment will test the best practitioner's determination. After you have led the learner to the need for and acceptance of a formal assessment, the search for funding begins. Assessments are expensive, and there may be other barriers. However, persevere! While funding sources may be reluctant to pay for assessments, after you have worked with your learner a while, you will be in the perfect position to advocate for the need for a formal assessment.

You can write a letter to advocate for funds to obtain a psychological assessment for your adult learner. Explore various agencies where funding may be available. Alberta



Works will pay for an assessment if the learner needs it to proceed to post-secondary for job training; there **must** be a specific occupational goal. Indigenous bands will fund assessments for their members. Workers' Compensation Board Alberta and some health care plans will pay for assessments.

Whether you are advocating for accommodations for the GED or funding from an agency for the completion of a formal assessment, you will need to list the strengths and weaknesses of your learner. Language for describing characteristics can be found in the sites listed below. Although the sites are written about children, you can extrapolate characteristics for adults.

- [Common Signs of Learning Disabilities](#) (LD Online)
- [Characteristics of Adults with Specific Learning Disabilities](#) (LD Online)

[Click here for an advocacy letter template.](#)

Include these elements in your letters:

Learner's information	CALP interaction	What you want and why
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Age</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Work experience</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Educational history</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> An outline of work/academic goals</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Length of time in CALP</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Learning disability characteristics</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Practitioner's observations</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Funding for assessment</li><li>• Learner's needs for assessment leading to accommodations in post-secondary</li></ul>

### Prepare the Learner for Assessment Day

Your learner's angst will mount before the date(s) of the assessment. Try to calm their fears with information about what to expect as found here: [Assessment Overview](#).

Let them know the psychologist will go over the results of the assessment, but it will be a lot to understand. Urge them to obtain a copy of the full test results from the psychologist and share it with you, so you can further help them to understand the results.

### Learner Reaction

Most CALP learners attempting to achieve basic literacy levels have experienced substantial failure with academics. Parents with little support and information about learning disabilities may have, over the years, told their child to work harder or chastised them repeatedly for not trying hard enough. Classmates may have labeled the child with a learning disability as dumb, stupid, slow, moron, and more. Often, educational failures were perceived as personal faults and evidence of intellectual deficiency. The adult's struggle with literacy may have limited their career choices and stifled job advancement. Years of pressures associated with having a learning disability may have resulted in feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, and lower self-esteem.



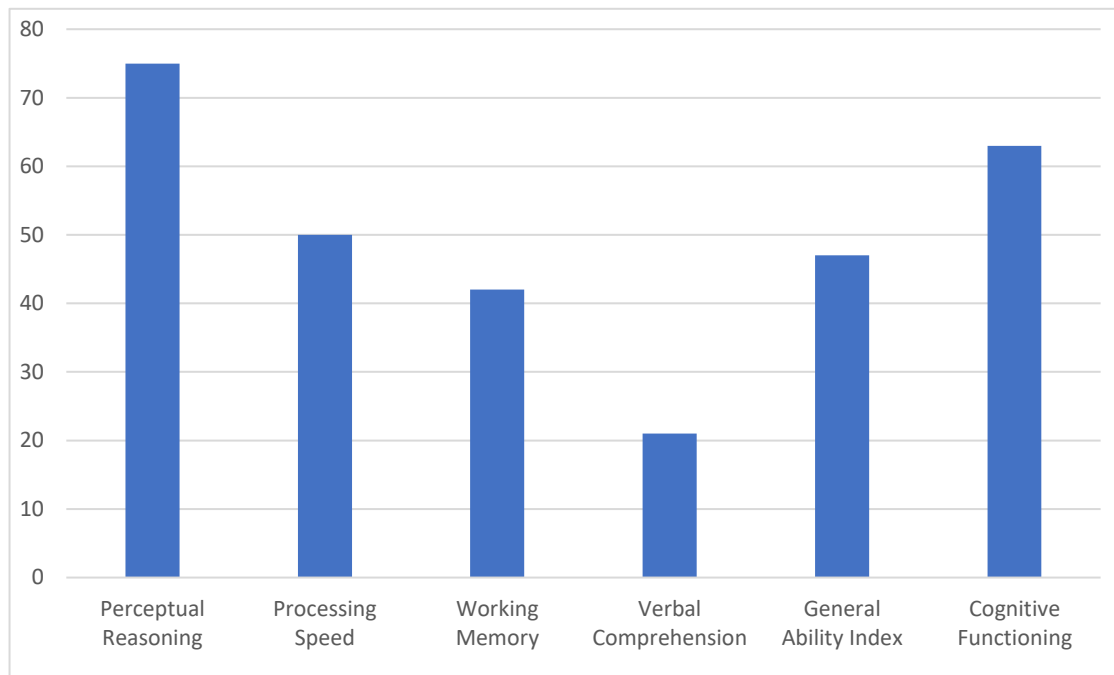
Most learners react to being labeled with a learning disability with relief. For most adults, it is a liberating revelation. Be ready for your learner to cry with relief. This relief will be the result of your care, instruction, and leadership. Deeper understanding of individual strengths and weaknesses will bring confidence and motivation.

Celebrate their journey!

## Understanding the results

The psychologist who assesses your learner will attempt to explain the results to them. Find out what the learner understands about their assessment. You may be shocked at how little is understood. You might consider taking the scores on the subtests and plot them on a graph to deepen understanding of the learner’s cognitive strengths and weaknesses, by both you and your learner. Review this graph with the learner over time.

This is an example of how to graph the scores to provide illustration of strengths and weakness:



**Perceptual Reasoning** refers to the ability to use information gained through the senses, especially vision, and how quickly the person makes sense of the information, is enabled to make a judgement about the world, and then proceeds to act on that judgement.

**Processing Speed** indicates the ability to perform relatively easy or over-learned cognitive tasks, automatically and fluently, especially when high mental efficiency is required.

**Working Memory** evaluates the person’s system for temporarily storing and managing the information required to carry out complex cognitive tasks such as learning, reasoning, and comprehension.

**Verbal Comprehension** measures the capacity to comprehend oral language, and ability to understand, analyze, and interpret written information.

**General Ability Index** provides an estimate of general intellectual ability.

**Cognitive Functioning** includes the following aptitudes: reasoning, memory, attention, and language, leading directly to the acquisition and retainment of information and, thus, knowledge.



## Self-Advocacy



You and your adult learner are crossing the finish line! Self-advocacy is the final step in this journey. Prepare your learners to advocate for themselves in post-secondary education and in the workplace. This final step develops confidence and identity and should be presented explicitly and practiced.

Expect the natural tendency of the adult to avoid disclosing their learning disability to post-secondary institutions and in the workplace. Many adults with learning disabilities thwart their own success by continuing to hide their learning disability. Discuss this explicitly.

**For post-secondary**, the learner must bring their formal assessment to the support services office in the institution they will be attending. The learners need to be able to speak on their own behalf, requesting, by a list, all accommodations and supports they will need to be successful. They will often have to communicate their needs to individual instructors. Make practice of this part of your learning opportunity. By now, you know your learner thoroughly. You are in the best position to role-play asking for help to meet the learning disability accommodation needs from support services, professors, career counselors, and more.

### DEEP DIVE – Self Advocacy for Post-Secondary:

- [Explicit Instruction of Self-Advocacy Skills](#) (LD@school)
- [Self-Advocacy for College Students](#) (LD Online)

**For the workplace**, much has been written about accommodations for a worker with a learning disability. Employers are required to accommodate workers to some extent. Workers with learning disabilities must know their strengths and weaknesses and be able to communicate their needs to employers.

Self-advocacy includes strength in knowledge of rights under Canada's and Alberta's Human Rights Acts and laws. Take your learners to this site to ensure a full understanding: [Alberta Human Rights](#).

### Duty to Accommodate

The Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that an employer has a legal duty to take **reasonable** steps, in policies or conditions of work, to accommodate an employee's individual needs. This duty applies to all grounds of discrimination covered under the [Alberta Human Rights Act](#) (race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status or sexual orientation). (Alberta Human Rights Commission, 2017)

CALPs can make self-advocacy practice a part of a course or tutoring. Use the information in the **DEEP DIVE** below to create something new and share it with the CALP system!

**DEEP DIVE – Self Advocacy in the Workplace:**

- [Learning Disabilities in the Workplace \[Canadian Council on Rehabilitation & Work\]](#) (EmployAbilities)
- [Disclosure in the Workplace](#) (Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario)
- [Advocacy for Workplace Accommodations](#) (Alberta alis)
- [Duty to Accommodate](#) (Alberta Human Rights Commission)



## Part 3

### UNIVERSAL PROGRAM DESIGN

Most of the adults who come to your CALP have been denied an equal access to education. This will include young adults directly out of high school. In most cases, schools, parents, grandparents, and tutors all attempted to deliver traditional programming to the adults who are now in your CALP. Traditional programs, already tried, will not result in success for adults with learning disabilities.

It takes years of one-to-one tutoring for adults with learning disabilities to learn to read with traditional methods. CALPs located outside of the major cities in Alberta are small in operation and budget. In the smaller towns, finding and retaining tutors is not always possible.

Traditional methods used for reading, writing, or math require years of effort on the part of the tutor and the learner. Most adults are unwilling to devote many years to gain basic literacy skills.

Alternatives exist, **and CALPs are positioned to provide adults with learning disabilities equal opportunities to obtain the same result, to gain the same benefit, or to reach the same level of achievement in the same amount of time as learners without disabilities.**

CALPs are free to create a new paradigm for developing and delivering literacy programs. The same techniques, tried and failed in K-12, need not be repeated.

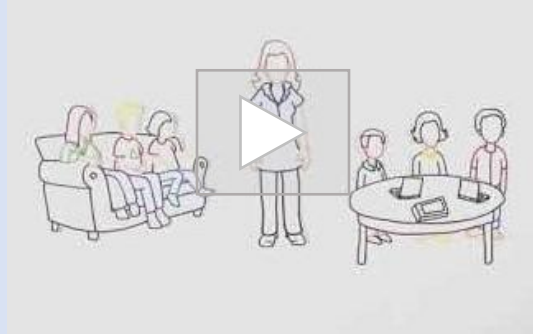


This is the premise of an equal education. **With or without a learning disability, adults should progress to the same level of achievement in the same amount of time.** If a learner is not progressing with the same level of achievement in the same amount of time, it is likely **not** the learner's ability to learn. Instead, the program or the delivery does not suit the learner, or the learner requires accommodations.

Thankfully, there are overall considerations for program development and delivery that will work well for adult learners. Your materials can be designed so they can be accessed, understood, and used to the greatest extent possible by all learners, regardless of ability. It is not a special requirement for the benefit of only adults with disabilities. Instead, it is simply a better design that considers the diverse needs and abilities of all adults. Offering a program in a format appropriate for adults with disabilities will accommodate **all** learners. This is called **Universal Design** for Learning (UDL).

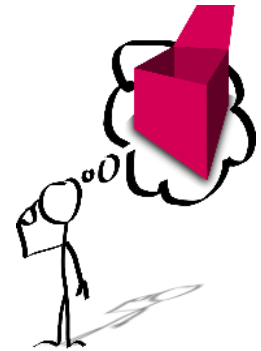
### Making Sense of Universal Design for Learning

Click to play video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQSAQdxnQBY>



Think outside the box. Identify and eliminate barriers! **Accommodations should be first on your mind.** Formal assessment or not, your learners with disabilities will need and excel with accommodations in place.

UDL depends on the use of technology to ensure accessibility for all learners. Electronic devices and software such as calculators, computers, cell phones, electronic dictionaries, and search engine extensions should be a staple in your CALP and used with all learners to provide accommodations that create equal access to learning.



Consider equipping your CALP with devices such as:

- Laptop computers (preferably touch screen and 14-inch screen minimum)
- iPads & tablets

Load laptops with accommodation tools like:

- Microsoft Word
- Read Aloud on Google Chrome
- Speaking dictionaries
- Read with Sight & Sound (CALP developed)
- Typesy Typing Program for Adults

## Creating the Materials

As you create your course, follow these three steps:

1. Decide what the learner needs for completion
2. Develop an outline of all the parts
3. Create the course respecting the persistent difficulties

### 1. Decide what the learner needs for completion

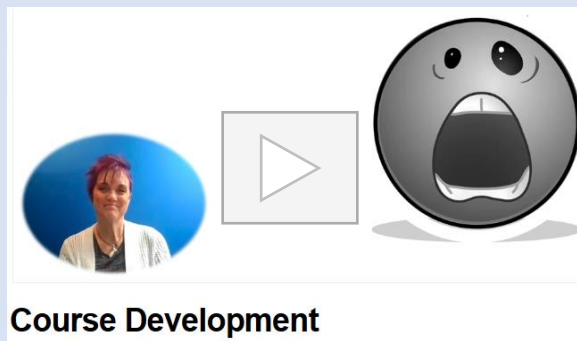
Typically, CALP practitioners are faced with a host of demands, including piecing together materials from the Internet or the [CALP Portal](#) in a frantic effort to meet learners' literacy needs. If the subject area is math, the temptation is to print work sheets with multiple problems of one type. This approach might get the practitioner through the appointment, but it will not lead to success for the learner. If the subject is writing, many CALP practitioners are lost. If the subject is reading, practitioners use tools provided on the Internet or CALP Portal. Unfortunately, many of the tools you will find are not designed for adults with disabilities.

Once you complete your **DEEP DIVE** into each persistent difficulty faced by adults with learning disabilities, you will understand the material you found on the Internet and the CALP Portal are not designed for inclusivity. Course materials developed for adults with disabilities are rare. Inclusive materials for your learner will depend on your course development and delivery.

Developing Courses – It's not as hard as you think!

Click to play video: <https://vimeo.com/678272468/3b285a6197>

Video Transcript: [https://calp.ca/\\_uploads/621e8d69a05e3.pdf](https://calp.ca/_uploads/621e8d69a05e3.pdf)



Getting started with course development includes:

- Identifying the goal for the learner
- Discovering what the learner knows and does not know in a subject area, revealed by your interview questions
- Identifying the learner’s required accommodations for completion

You cannot lead the learner to success if you are unsure of the end goals.

At first, you will work hard to develop courses and materials. Create the outline for the course, beginning to end, then you can break it into parts. You might only be one step ahead with preparation for the first learner. That is okay. With subsequent learners you will have materials ready, and you will continue to develop your course and add and revise materials as time and demands allow.

The guidelines in the next two steps are a starting point to help you on your path to creating UDL materials. If you create materials and deliver accessible materials to adults with learning disabilities, they will find more success with all literacy skills. Remember the offered guidelines should be considered as your starting point for deeper exploration of UDL materials; the topic is much deeper than can be presented in this manual.

## 2. Develop an outline for all the parts

Think about the essentials your learner needs to be successful in a particular subject area. You can go to websites to see what others are putting forth as parts to a course. Then, pare it down to its most basic components. Finally, put the outline of components into plain language.

Resist the temptation to adopt and follow the design of programs on the Internet. Instead, think about the basics of any subject the learner requires and start there. You can always add more after the learner is competent in the basics, if needed.

Avoid including exercises that are not essential. Do not expect **mental flexibility** in your learners. Mental math gymnastics, seen in many math programs, detract from the basic end goal of performing addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division in the basic categories (whole numbers, decimals, fractions). For example, one exercise is counting by 2s, 3s, and 5s. Does your learner absolutely need to know how to do this? If not, remove it from the course.

Perhaps you will want to create a basic decimal course. Course options you can find on the Internet may provide a massive number of skills, just for decimals. Compare the whopping 279 skills for learning decimals listed on [this site](#) to the eight-part Decimal Basics course outline (shown here) that seeks to impart in plain language:

- The meaning of decimals
- Skills for adding
- Skills for subtracting
- Skills for multiplying
- Skills for dividing decimals

Decimal Basics
1. Meaning & Naming-
a) Decimals &
b) Mixed Decimals
2. Place Values-
a) Decimals &
b) Mixed Decimals
3. Zeros--0s
4. Identify the Size
5. Adding
a) Decimals &
b) Mixed Decimals
6. Subtracting
a) Decimals &
b) Mixed Decimals
7. Multiplying
a) Decimals &
b) Mixed Decimals
c) With Zeros
8. Dividing Decimals
a) Inside the bracket
b) Outside the bracket
c) Inside & outside the bracket.

### 3. Create the course while respecting persistent learning difficulties

You have already learned a great deal about the persistent difficulties experienced by adults with learning disabilities. While UDL is not meant to only benefit people with disabilities, having a command of the persistent difficulties makes your considerations for UDL better informed.

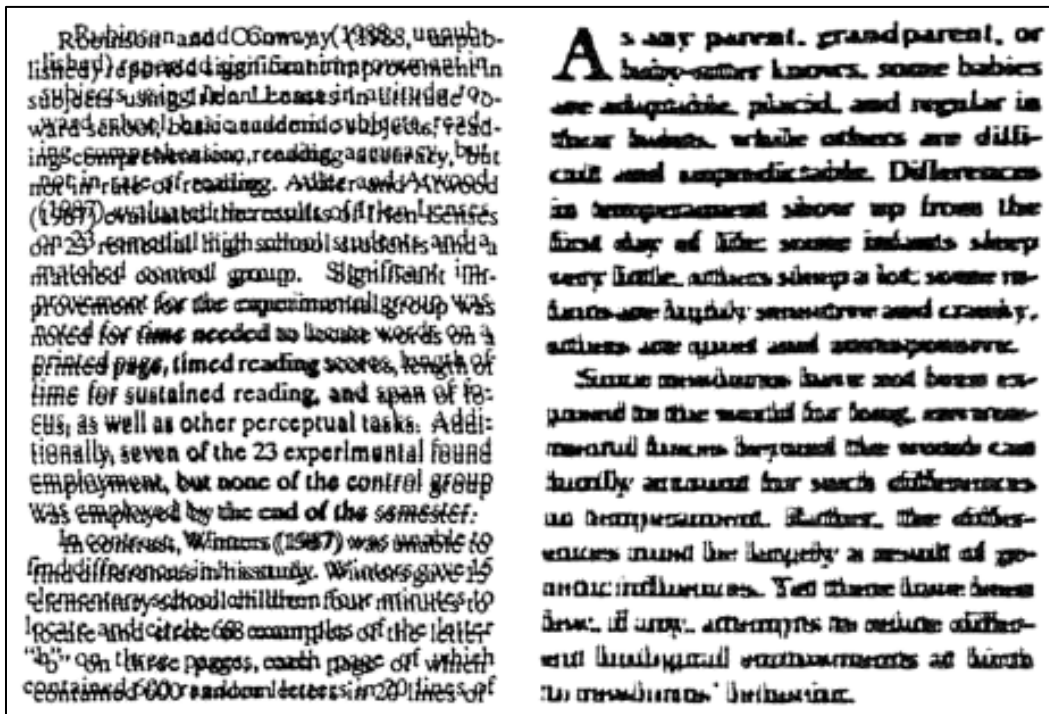
#### Formatting Considerations

Certain formatting considerations in materials for people with learning disabilities are well known, including font size for letters and numbers, space between printed lines, space between objects, and use of color codes for visual cues and emphasis, or to **delineate** and assist focus.

- All print materials should be large font (16–18 pt minimum).
- Any materials you create for written work will be better learning tools if the font is large (16–18 pt min). Urge your learners to use the same large font for computer written work.
- Use double-spaced materials for reading, and double-space any print material you create.
- Math number fonts should be larger font (20–24 pt).
- Use extra spaces between objects like operation signs (+ - x ÷).

Written work for the adult with a learning disability can float and move on the page. A bottom line may float to the line above, and a top line can migrate down to the next line; words can

jump from line to line. Larger font size can reduce stress and headaches for the learner and reduce confusion and frustration.



*The look of reading material for the individual with dyslexia*  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:DyslexicVision.png>

For math, font size should not only be large, but large spaces between numbers are essential. As well, color greatly assists the learner.

$$\frac{3}{5} + \frac{8}{5} = \frac{11}{5} = 2\frac{1}{5}$$

This is an example of using larger sized font, and all parts are widely spaced. Color is used to focus the learner: the denominators are all red; the numerators are all blue. The yellow highlight signals to the learner the fraction is improper and needs to be reduced. Following a color pattern and using color to cue a learner will greatly assist the facilitator when doing online presentations (e.g., Zoom) – referencing the colors can help visually lead the learner. The addition of color to the programs you create will serve to emphasize, delineate, and assist focus. The large font size and the greater space between all objects is essential.

Compare the previous fraction presentation to this plain text example – all black and white with numbers and symbols too close together. The close spacing even makes it difficult to see the space between the division lines and subtraction signs.

$$2 - \frac{2}{3} =$$

$$1 \frac{3}{3} - \frac{2}{3} =$$

$$1 \frac{1}{3}$$

$$3 \frac{1}{2} \div \frac{3}{4} = \frac{7}{2} \div \frac{3}{4}$$

$$= \frac{7}{2} \times \frac{4}{3}$$

$$= \frac{7}{2_1} \times \frac{4^2}{3} = \frac{7 \times 2}{1 \times 3} = \frac{14}{3} = 4 \frac{2}{3}$$

The black and white, small, crowded fonts become even more problematic as equations increase in complexity, as in this example.

$$*_{\sim} * : , _ , : *_{\sim} * : , _ , : *_{\sim}$$

$$" , _ , " , _ , "$$

$$= ^ , , ^ = = \wedge |$$

$$'_{\sim} ' - , , _ , - '_{\sim} ' - , , _ , - '_{\sim} ' -$$

The learner may just see black and white gobbledygook.

Adults with learning disabilities can experience difficulties with visual processing, which affects how visual information is interpreted or processed by the brain. Position of objects in space are especially important. The ability to accurately perceive objects in space with reference to other objects affects reading and math where accurate perception and understanding of spatial relationships are especially important. Confusion of similarly shaped symbols and letters adds to the burden. The black and white math examples above show how such presentation makes perception of objects in relation to other objects more difficult.

**The only cues for the learners may be the use of color and spacing between symbols or numbers that you provide.** As you develop materials, avoid presupposing an ability and understanding of spatial relationships. Instead, plan your course development in a way that helps your learners see the difference. Use color, form, shape, pattern, size, and position wisely to the advantage of all learners.



## Chunking and Wordiness

Two elements are essential to the design of the course:

- Chunking your material into small sections
- Avoiding wordiness

### ***Chunk your material into small sections:***

After you decide on the entirety of the course you will develop for your learner, decide how to chunk the entire program into small, manageable chapters, parts, lessons, or any other title.

#### **Example 1. Chunk a multiplication chapter**

If you discover that your adult learner can add and subtract whole numbers, but they cannot multiply and divide whole numbers, you may decide to start by developing two units: one for multiplication and one for division. From there, you can chunk the learning further like this:

1. Multiply one digit by one digit
2. Multiply one digit by two digits
3. Multiply one digit by three digits
4. Multiply one digit by four digits, and so on

$$\begin{array}{r} 4 \\ \times 2 \\ \hline 8 \end{array} \quad \begin{array}{r} 32 \\ \times 3 \\ \hline 96 \end{array}$$

*Examples of one and two digit multiplication*

#### **Example 2. Chunk a writing chapter**

You may find that your learner knows how to write sentences but does not know how to write paragraphs. You may decide to start chunking a unit about paragraph writing like this:

1. Writing topic sentences
2. Writing supporting details
3. Writing concluding sentences



**Avoid wordiness:**

Wordiness is using too many words or using complex constructions and abstract words that will seriously frustrate a listener or reader. The more words you use to explain a concept, the more difficult comprehension becomes. Each time you develop a unit, work the directions or steps repeatedly until you are using the least number of words to make it clearly understood.



**Example 1. Wordy math**

A number is divisible by another number if it can be divided equally by that number; that is, if it yields a whole number when divided by that number. For example, 6 is divisible by 3 (we say "3 divides 6") because  $6/3 = 2$ , and 2 is a whole number. 6 is not divisible by 4, because  $6/4 = 1.5$ , and 1.5 is not a whole number.

**Example 2. Concise math (using color and proper spacing)**

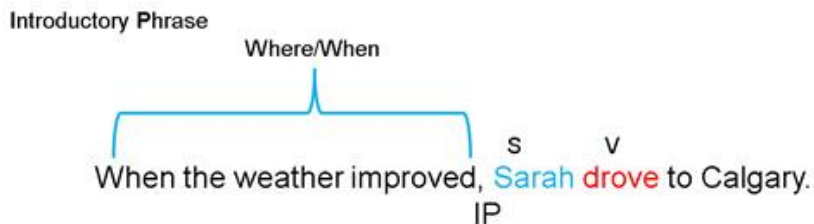
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Add the <b>tops</b></li> <li>2. Keep the <b>bottoms</b></li> <li>3. Reduce</li> </ol>	$\frac{3}{7} + \frac{2}{7} = \frac{5}{7}$
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**Example 3. Wordy comma rule**

Use a comma at the end of an introductory phrase. This rule can be confusing because introductory phrases are often hard to identify. Essentially, an introductory phrase begins a sentence by providing a transition from the last sentence, or background information, before the independent phrase. Introductory phrases come in the form of prepositional phrases, subordinate clauses, and transitional expressions. Whenever one of these is used at the beginning of a sentence, a comma should be placed after it.



**Example 4. Concise comma rule (using color)**



**Offer Audio Versions**

Consider adding sound to the text of any program you create. This can be achieved by reading and recording the program yourself or your organization can choose to use a service such as [ReadSpeaker.com](https://www.readspeaker.com). This service allows you to copy your text into their text-to-speech tool on their website, and it will output audio files of the text being read.

The methods described in this section encourage you to shift to a more UDL program that will better serve adults with learning disabilities. It is important to mention that the outlined design considerations have been tried successfully with adults with mild to moderate developmental disabilities and adults with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD).

## Part 4

### UNIVERSAL PROGRAM DELIVERY

Now that you have created an inclusive course with all the elements discussed in the previous section, it is time to think about the most effective ways you can deliver the content of your course so all learners can be successful.

#### Establish a pattern of delivery

Establishing a pattern of delivery that encompasses memory strategies will help you reach all learners. The pattern you overtly teach can be applied by the learner to any course material encountered later. The following is a suggested pattern of delivery that is known to work well for adults with learning disabilities. Remain flexible and always be ready, willing, and able to modify to meet an individual's unique learning needs.

The pattern contains six parts:

1. Present the outline of all parts to be learned in your course
2. Present a chunk of the material
3. Reverse roles
4. Include memory strategies for effective learning
5. Provide practice
6. Provide **intermittent** practice for the whole course.

#### **1. Present the outline of all parts to be learned in your course**

Present from whole to part instead of presenting parts of the course without the learner being able to see the big picture. If the learner does not have a sense of all that is to be learned, the tasks can seem infinite and the end unachievable. As each section is completed, review the outline page to congratulate the learner on successfully finishing a part, and review the parts still to be learned. In this way, the learner can see their progress and feel their accomplishments.

#### **2. Present a chunk of the material**

The chunk you present may be a line, a paragraph, or a page. Start small to find out what your learner can handle. Before you start your presentation, inform the learner that they will be presenting it back to you. Model all the elements important for this chunk. If you find that you are talking and talking, either your chunk is too large or you are just talking too much. Prepare what you need to say with the least words possible to convey the idea of what is to be learned. As you work with your learner, you will come to know how much of a chunk can be presented in one turn.

### 3. Reverse roles

Have the learner present the same chunk back to you. If the learner’s presentation is incorrect or missing elements, repeat your presentation or reduce your presentation chunk.

Here is an example of a rule for subtraction of two proper fractions with common denominators. It has the three steps below:

1. Subtract **the tops**
2. Keep **the bottoms**
3. Reduce

You could present the three steps all at once. If the learner is unable to repeat all three steps after you, try one step at a time. After the learner has presented all three steps, one at a time, try again to present all the steps at once and see if the learner can now present all three steps back to you.

### 4. Include memory strategies for effective learning

Where appropriate, and if needed, use memory strategies as part of your presentation.

#### ***Developing strategies:***

Become a partner with your learners in the development of memory strategies. Overtly state it is a strategy for learning that they can use in this course and later for other academic pursuits.



Creating the first few strategies can be hard. Persevere until it is accomplished. Subsequent efforts become easier. Strategies involve the use of senses to attach new information to information that already exists in the individual’s memory. The use of multiple senses in a memory strategy will result in better retention.

Strategies should be 100% created by the learner to be 100% effective for recall later.

However, you can start by creating a full strategy as a demonstration. Think aloud to model how you develop a strategy, so the learner can follow your progression and learn by example. You may want to develop a few full strategies to be prepared.

When presenting, partially develop the strategy to get it started, but then invite the learner’s input to develop it further. Keep engaging the learner to develop more and more until they can fully develop their own strategies.

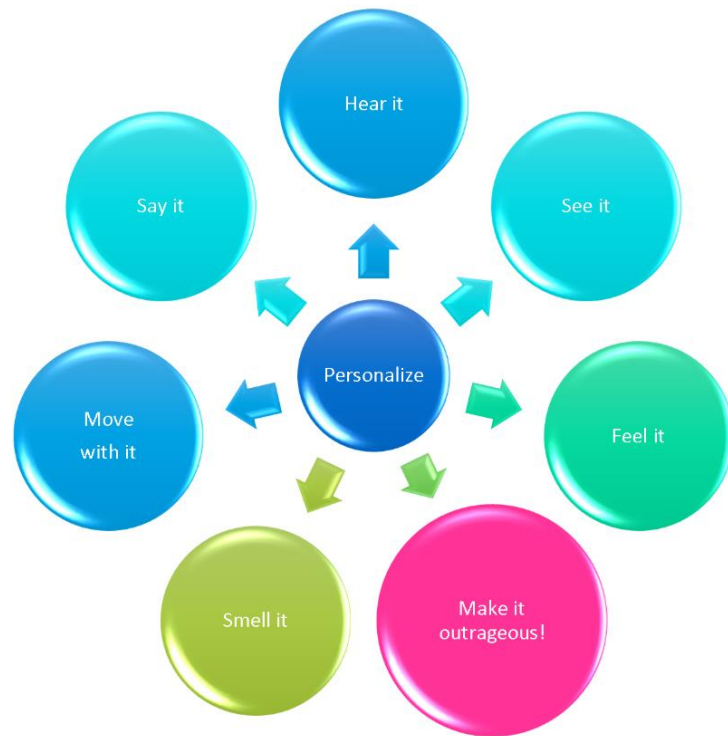
The goal is for the learners to take risks, actively engage in learning, enhance self-confidence, and know how to create learning strategies for later learning (2020 CALP Guidelines, Section 5.3.1, p.27).

***Personalize the strategy:***

Memory strategies work most effectively when they are personalized, with any one or a combination of senses. Leading the learner to mastery will depend on your adherence to expanding the personalization of the memory strategies.

To make it their own and to make it work for them, encourage your learner to personalize by adding their own ideas for any of the senses (as listed in the bubbles) to ensure effectiveness. The material needing to be mastered will lend itself to the choice of senses to be used. Using a combination of strategies will be the most effective.

The memory of a strategy is best achieved when the creator makes it **outrageous!**



Encourage your learner to use wild imagination when developing a memory strategy. Ask them to describe the smell of something (smell it) or to imagine something funny about a chunk of information (see it). Ask them to say aloud the information to be learned (say it; hear it). Better yet, have them yell it (make it outrageous). Whenever possible, incorporate movement or the imagining of movement (move with it). Ask them to put themselves in the picture and touch what's there (feel it). Throughout the process, remind your learner the connections do not need to be consistent with reality. Make it weird!

### Personalization of Memory Strategy

Click to play video: <https://vimeo.com/683534267/4a0e4953b6>

Video Transcript: [https://calp.ca/\\_uploads/621ea9986c9ef.pdf](https://calp.ca/_uploads/621ea9986c9ef.pdf)



### Examples of incorporating bubble elements in learning:



**Move with it.** The inclusion of movement may work best for some parts of a *Learners Permit Preparation in Clear Language* course, for example. Movement to physically practice traffic circles, turns, passing, and all other components fits easily. You could set up your space with traffic patterns, using whatever is available to you. Traffic patterns could be set up on paper or a mat; place it on a big table and use small car manipulatives to practice the traffic patterns.

**Speak it.** Speaking adds to the development. Using the same example, you can add speaking to the movement. As the learner acts out the turns, have them say what they are doing and why. You can even add outrageousness too by having the learner shout what they are doing and why.

### Memory Strategy: Proper Versus Improper Fractions

Click to play video: <https://vimeo.com/678272886/9d2a74d48e>

Video Transcript: [https://calp.ca/\\_uploads/621e8ebdafb59.pdf](https://calp.ca/_uploads/621e8ebdafb59.pdf)





**Say it.** Oral recitation may work well with steps in math. For example, in learning addition of two proper fractions with common denominators, the learner can be asked to read aloud the steps – repeating this three times:

- 1) Add the tops
- 2) Keep the bottoms
- 3) Reduce

Then, cover the words and ask them to say the steps aloud without reading.

**Feel it.** While speaking, the learner is using the sense of feel in the mouth and tongue.

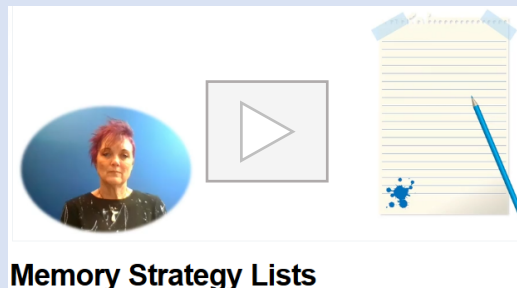
**Hear it.** They are also hearing as they speak. *Does the learner need more?*

**Move with it.** Ask the learner to stand up and stomp, with alternating feet, while reciting the three steps.

### Memory Strategy for a List

Click to play video: <https://vimeo.com/678272988/283ff7b266>

Video Transcript: <https://calp.ca/admin/uploads/621e8ed59bc9e.pdf>



A learner needs to remember the speed limits for three areas: on highways, in town, and in school zones. **Feel it:** Prompt the learner to imagine standing in front of the nearest school. Ask him to say what he feels. **Say it:** Tell him to look at the 30 km speed sign and yell, “School zone–30 km–slow down!” Then, ask him to imagine standing on the town’s main street in front of a familiar

landmark and **See** the cars moving a bit faster than in the school zone. **Say it:** Ask him to say aloud, “The speed limit is 50 km in town.” Now have him imagine a location just outside of town where the speed limit changes. Ask him to imagine standing under the 100 km sign.

**See it:** Ask him what he sees–the 100 km sign, the tourist information spot, one massive evergreen. **Feel it & make it outrageous:** Imagine your hair flying all over as the wind from trucks pass you by. Imagine sand blown in your face as it is kicked up by the trucks. **Feel** how angry that makes you! Imagine a bird passing by that says, “It’s 100 km in my territory.” **Say it:** “The speed limit is 100 km on the highways.”

## 5. Provide practice

The first practice in a course should be short and reinforce only the elements presented. As you move through the presentation of each chunk, add previously presented elements for practice.

It is a mistake to give practice sheets with numerous examples of one category. In math, content is learned with accurate performance of just a few practice problems. If the learner can demonstrate they know the process for solving all the types of problems, move on to step six.



You can reinforce the skill with intermittent practice using one or two practice problems. Explain to the learner the importance of intermittent practice to drive the skill into long-term memory. Lighten the load for the learner. Think mastery of the type of skill presented, rather than endless repetition of problems to practice.

**Think quality over quantity.**

## 6. Provide intermittent practice for the whole course

After your course is completed, give a comprehensive practice that incorporates each element you presented. Then, wait a week and give it again. Then, wait two weeks and give it again. If the performance each time is stellar, the course may be considered complete. If errors occur, review any part with an error. Give the comprehensive practice again.

Mental flexibility is the ability to shift a course of thought or action according to the changing demands of a situation, and mental flexibility is difficult for many adults with learning disabilities.

This accounts for many errors in math. Learners complete one type of problem but struggle to shift to the next type of problem presented. They do not recognize the change in type of problem. If the learner completes four addition problems and the next one is a subtraction problem, they will continue to add because they do not possess the ability to change their thinking; this is mental inflexibility. You may reduce the learner's ability to perform math operations successfully if you provide multiple problems of the same kind. To assist effective learning, provide less practice problems and ensure the problems you present represent all the categories that must be mastered. This practice will improve the learner's ability to shift thought and action to meet the demand of the new math problem presented.

The six steps for program delivery, including the memory strategies, have been tried and shown to be successful with adults with mild to moderate developmental disabilities and FASD. You are encouraged to try these methods on all learners.



## Part 5

### GETTING STARTED WITH MATH, READING, AND WRITING



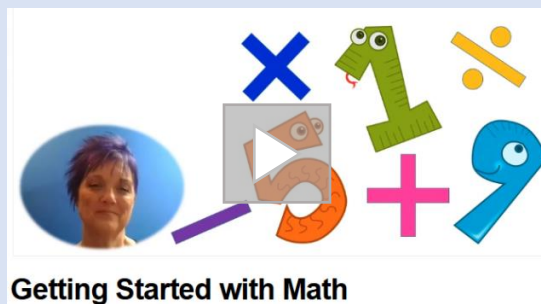
#### Math

But where do I start with math?

#### Getting Started With Math

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Video Transcript: <https://calp.ca/uploads/621e8eed0100e.pdf>



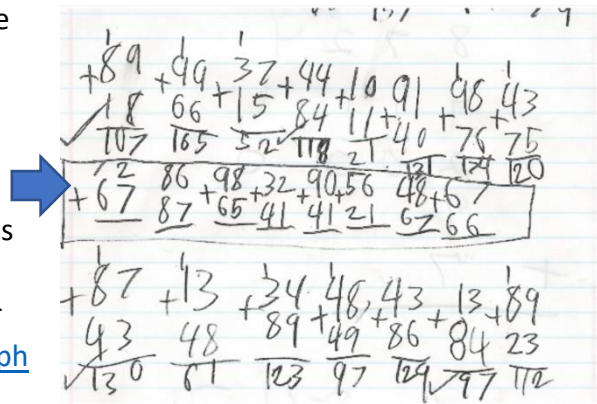
Adults with learning disabilities will struggle with reversals, including a 9 for a 6 or a 3 written backwards. All operational signs may be sporadically reversed. A multiplication sign exchanged for a division sign or an addition sign exchanged for a subtraction sign leads to wrong answers. At times, despite using the correct operational sign, the opposite operation is performed, resulting in an incorrect answer. The handwriting of the adult can also play a part. The adult may not be able to read the numbers they have written.

Often, parents and teachers labeled the mistakes in math as careless. This label does not reflect the action of the adult. Random error is a better term for the mistakes made in math, reflecting the many challenges inherent with learning disabilities. When errors occur, tell the learner that a random error just happened. Overtly examine the reason for the error and label the error.

For example, you might tell the learner that although the operation was a plus sign, they subtracted. Persistent difficulties can sometimes be helped by assigning colors for each operation and using the colors consistently when practicing.



Individuals with pronounced spatial deficits will be unable to write their numbers in columns or properly space numbers from left to right. The result is a worksheet impossible to manage. This example shows crowding and misalignment so severe that the entire middle row of problems was skipped. Provide large-boxed graph paper to encourage alignment. Many sites are available for printing the size to fit your needs (find a [large graph paper template](#) here).



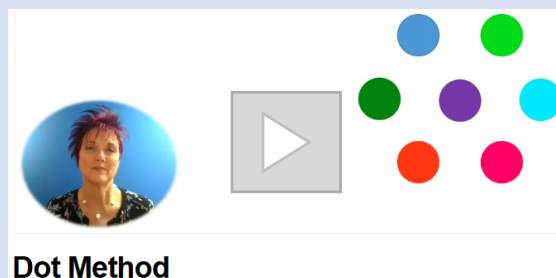
## The Dot Method

Although the learner can use a calculator for math calculations, life situations occur when the adult needs to be able to add and subtract when a calculator is not available. During your interview, if you see the adult can only perform addition and subtraction using finger counting, the Dot Method is a perfect solution. Even adults at the severe end of the continuum of memory difficulties can use this method with great success. The Dot Method can be taught in one appointment and only needs a couple of appointments for reinforcement. Addition and subtraction with any number of digits can be easily performed using the Dot Method. Adults are thrilled and relieved to know this method.

### Dot Method

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Video Transcript: <https://calp.ca/uploads/621e8f032e6e9.pdf>

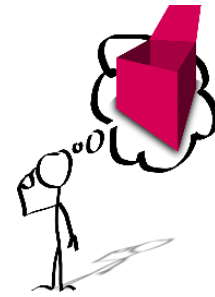


[Click here to reveal printable pages pertaining to this video.](#)

### What does the adult with learning disabilities need for success in math?

Ensure your learners use a calculator for all math work. Addition, subtraction and multiplication facts are not able to be recalled by most learners with learning disabilities. Being relieved of doing the basic calculations by using a calculator will allow the learner to focus on retention of the all-important sequence of steps necessary in higher math.

Limit practice problems in math. Instead, look for mastery of types, like addition of fractions with common denominators, subtraction of two numbers top and bottom with borrowing, or any of the categories listed in the Decimal Basics course outline on page 36.





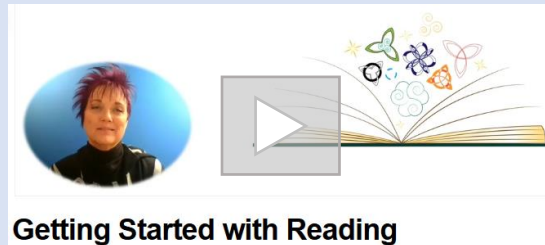
## Reading

But where do I start with reading?

### Getting Started with Reading

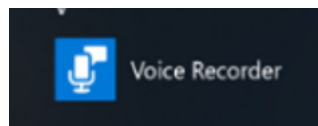
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**Getting Started with Reading**

Prepare a few paragraphs in varying degrees of difficulty to have available when a learner shows up at your CALP door. It is best to type out the paragraphs with size 16 font, double spaced.



Learn how to use the voice recorder on your laptop to record all reading aloud by the learner so you have it for analysis. Save and organize recorded files in folders (one for each learner).

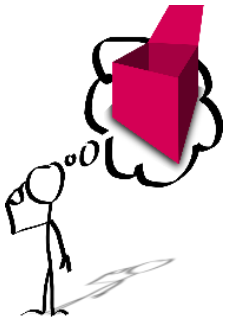
Prepare your learner that you will be asking them to read aloud, and you will be recording it as a **baseline** of their starting point with reading. Impress upon them that you will not be helping with the reading at all. Tell them to just try their best to read to the end.

**Decoding difficulty:** Most adults who come to your CALP for reading help will not be able to decode (sound out) the words, despite years of trying.

**Retention and recall difficulty:** A few might be able to read well but be unable to remember what was read. In this case, the problem is not reading. The difficulty for the adult is retention and recall. Adults usually know if they cannot remember what is read and will tell you. If this is the case, your course should be created using comprehension strategies. You can find reading recall and retention strategies on this [Gallaudet University webpage](#).

## Reading solution

As a CALP provider, attempting to deliver reading skills to adults can be a daunting challenge.



Think outside the box regarding the approach to reading. Create an equal opportunity to obtain the same result and the same level of achievement in the same amount of time as your learners without disabilities.

Remember that the adult with a learning disability who comes to you for reading help has already spent years attempting to conquer phonics. Years of public-school instruction, private tutoring, and herculean parental efforts did not result in reading mastery.

*The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.*

Albert Einstein

Since learning disabilities are life-long, the children with learning disabilities become the adults with learning disabilities who enter your CALP. They enter with the same difficulty of phonetic decoding and sight word recognition. Over the years, the CALP approach has been to use the traditional phonics methods with one-to-one volunteer tutors. Some are using phonics and other strategies. There have been successes, but it takes years of effort on the part of the tutor and the learner. To be fair to your learner, inform them it will take years to learn this method one-to-one and ensure they agree at the start. If you proceed with phonics, your CALP should ensure capable tutors are available for the long haul.

It is worth mentioning that learners and teachers alike think you must learn phonics to be able to read. Learners will want phonics because it is all they know. When you know better, you do better. Practitioners reading this manual will know better. If you lead the learner with confidence to a program that works with their strengths and delivers better results, the learner will follow.

## A universally designed reading program

A strengths-based approach to teaching reading (or delivering reading instruction) can be more enjoyable for both CALP providers and learners. Strengths-based approaches will achieve better result in less time and with less struggle. Kinder and more efficient methods will allow the adult to use a different and complex set of mental strategies to achieve reading.

So, is there another way to learn to read other than phonics? Yes, and it is a win-win. Your learner wins with quick and lasting reading improvement; your CALP wins through the accomplishment.





**Read with Sight & Sound (RSS) is an approach to reading acquisition that is not phonics dependent.**

Anyone can learn to read from this course, but it is universally designed for any adult who struggles with reading, no matter the reason.

RSS relies on the strengths of the adult and side-steps the persistent difficulties adults with learning disabilities experience. If English is the first language, learning to read with this method will work, even if the adult has no previous schooling.

How does it work?

RSS removes the mountain of reading struggle for the adult with a short-term memory weakness or a language-based disability like dyslexia. As a key first step, it removes the nearly impossible requirement of remembering the sounds and recognition of letters and letter combinations. Gone are the embarrassment, anxiety, and helplessness of being stuck on words they cannot decode. Removing struggle is a key component that leads to nearly immediate reading progress. With this method, reading is accomplished by a steady accumulation of meaningful, high-interest adult stories with contextual and **predictable** content. Prediction is assisted in the learning process; the adult listens to the entire story before mastering each sentence within the story.

As the learner reads more stories, meaningful information leads to persistent memory connections. Motor memory, muscle memory, and auditory memory connections become more numerous and stronger. The brain connections will grow, and words in meaningful sentences and stories will be recognized in subsequent reading. Repetition of meaningful sentences cements the learning.

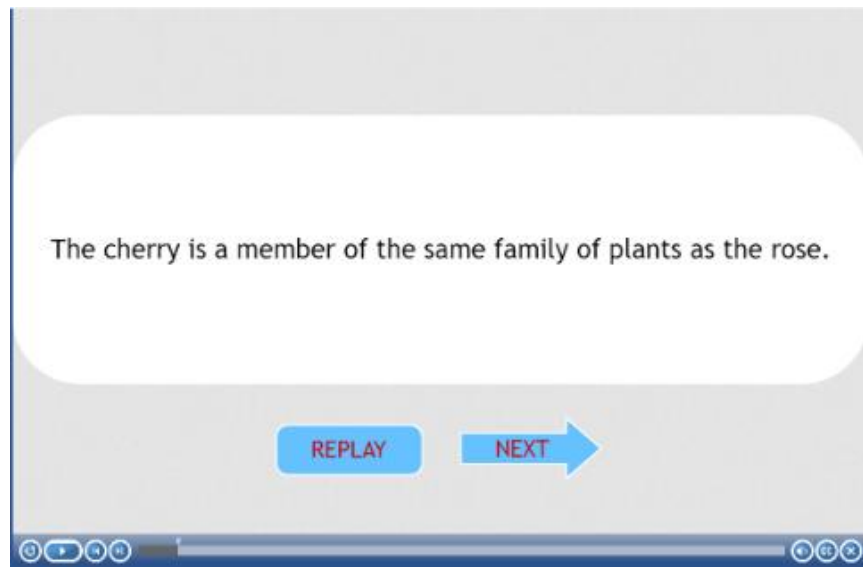


### **Program Content**

RSS has four levels with multiple stories in each level. The introductory stories are short (just one paragraph) to ensure swift success for the learner. As the learner continues, the stories become longer and have more difficult vocabulary. The stories are provided as files on a memory stick for you to print and put in binders labeled by level. Images are included for the front of each binder.

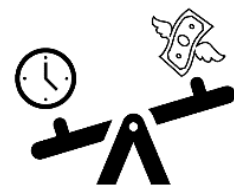
### **Audio:**

In the RSS program, all the stories have been put to audio and individual sentence display. The learner uses this feature on their own to listen and then speak the sentences after listening, repeating the process as many times as they like for each sentence. When the sentence is mastered, the learner moves on to the next sentence. When the story is mastered, the learner calls the tutor and reads the entire story, without the assist of the audio sound. Then, the learner is ready to move on to the next story.



### **Cost effective:**

CALPs typically operate on limited budgets, and many CALPs find it nearly impossible to attract and retain qualified volunteer tutors. As previously stated, it takes years of one-to-one instruction to impart phonics skills to learners. Usually, CALPs do not have the budget for this kind of instruction. With RSS, the cost is minimal, and the time spent with a learner after each story is about 15-20 minutes.



The RSS program can be put on a computer without an Internet connection. Learning to read will be done without embarrassment in the privacy of the learner’s own home. After set-up, tutors can work from home to deliver RSS.



**Reading levels:**

RSS has no grade levels. The learner will progress through several stories grouped from Introductory RSS to Advanced RSS. When the learner finishes all levels, your CALP can move the learner to any recorded articles or books, by providing the print for the story (double-spaced and enlarged) and the sound for the written word. The RSS program provides the base for further reading with sound. As the adult reads and listens to longer passages at higher levels, their background information and vocabulary will build. All the words combined from all the stories in the RSS program along with the build-up of vocabulary in meaningful sentences will result in the learner reading with proficiency. The more the learner reads and listens, the better their reading skills will be. With your guidance, the stage is set for the learner to continue to any level of reading they wish, including reading at a university level.

**One Learner’s Experience with RSS**



To give you an idea of the effectiveness of the program, listen to one CALP learner’s experience with the program.

The intake story *Cherries* was recorded as a baseline. The story *Coffee Culture* was given to the learner after he practiced only 11 stories at home.

He was presented with the printed copy of *Coffee Culture* and given five minutes to look at it. The voice recorder was turned on, and he was asked to read. Only two words were pointed out to him because these specific words had not been presented in any other of the 11 stories. The two words given were “coffee” and “culture”.



***Cherries***

Listen to [this recording](#) of the learner’s reading ability upon entering the CALP.

1. The cherry is a member of the same family of plants as the rose.
2. It is closely related to the plum.
3. Like cherry trees, plumb trees also flower in early spring.
4. Cherries are thought to be native to western Asia.
5. There are two major kinds of cherries harvested in the world, sweet and sour.
6. Sour cherries are not eaten fresh because they contain little sugar.
7. Instead, they are processed to make prepared foods like jellies and pies and to make alcoholic drinks.
8. The United States is a major producer of sour cherries.
9. Among the states, Michigan is the top producer.
10. Sweet cherries contain much more sugar than their sour relatives and are usually eaten fresh.
11. Washington state is the biggest American producer, followed by California and Oregon.
12. Fresh cherries do not store well.
13. They must reach market as soon as possible.
14. So, they cost more than many other kinds of fresh fruit.

### ***Coffee Culture***

Listen to [this recording](#) to see the results after practicing only 11 stories. The learner had not seen nor listened to this story previously.

1. At a coffee shop, you can enjoy a cup of coffee as you read the newspaper or meet with friends.
2. The shop is very busy and lively.
3. The people who work there can quickly make a coffee drink. |
4. Coffee is one of the world's favorite drinks.
5. In the United States, the number of coffee shops has grown over the years.
6. In nineteen ninety-five there were five thousand shops for coffee.
7. By two thousand six, there were almost twenty-four thousand.
8. It is hard to walk down a street in an American city without coming across a coffee shop.
9. And, chances are, that coffee shop might be a Starbucks.
10. Starbucks has helped make coffee culture a popular part of people's daily lives.
11. The stores sell all kinds of coffee.

Surprising, right? It works! No gimmicks.

Try this course if you want to offer an adult reading course in your community.

Read With Sight and Sound has been used successfully with adults with mild to moderate developmental disabilities and FASD. Since we can never fully know the strengths and gaps of learners, you are encouraged to present the RSS program to any learner who struggles with reading.



Read with Sight & Sound is copyrighted and can be purchased by CALPs and used only with CALP learners. The cost is a one-time fee of \$150.00 for use with all the purchasing CALP's learners. Purchase the program from Slave Lake Adult Education.

The program comes with a how-to PowerPoint presentation for you and for your learner. It is easy to follow, with step-by-step instructions, explaining how to set up and deliver the course.

Support for the program is provided by Slave Lake Adult Education. For more information or to order, contact:

Program Coordinator, Slave Lake Adult Education  
1201 Main Street SE  
Slave Lake AB T0G 2A3  
P: (780) 849-8625  
E: [sladulted@gmail.com](mailto:sladulted@gmail.com)  
<https://slavelakeadulthoodeducation.com>

## Irlen Institute – Another part of your toolbox



Irlen Syndrome, or Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome, was first identified in the early 1980s by educational psychologist Helen Irlen.

Irlen Syndrome is a perceptual processing disorder caused by the brain's inability to process specific wavelengths of light. Symptoms are similar to dyslexia, but Irlen Syndrome differs in that the symptoms are caused by light sensitivity issues of an individual.

A certain number of adults with visual processing difficulty may find success when reading with Irlen color overlays on print or wearing glasses with the tint. Tinted glasses or overlays may provide relief from headaches, sore eyes, and fatigue while reading. Tinted glasses may stop print from moving on the page for the reader and thereby improve reading ability and academic function.



Learn more about the Irlen Lens Solution

Play this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mnyc3rA2NtA>



Adults can self-screen as a start, and information on locations, contact numbers, and costs for in-depth testing are provided on the [Irlen Alberta](#) website.

[Click here to find out about the testing process and pricing from a provider in Edmonton.](#)

Consider ordering a pack of the color overlays to have on hand in your CALP. Having the learner try the color overlays may result in immediate feedback. Some adults can easily see and feel the positive result of using a particular color on their ability to look at a page of print. Learners who see improvement using the colors can continue on to tinted lenses in prescription or non-prescription glasses through Irlen Alberta. Note that the glasses tint will rarely be the same color as the overlay.



Funding may be available for Irlen Syndrome in-depth testing. For eligibility and referral details, contact:

Judy Pool, B.Sc., M. Ed.  
E: [reading@telus.net](mailto:reading@telus.net)  
P: 780-439-8120

Nola Stigings  
Certified Irlen Diagnostician/Clinic Director  
President of the Canadian Association of  
Irlen Professionals (CAIP)  
E: [nola@irlenalberta.ca](mailto:nola@irlenalberta.ca)  
P: 403-896-0044



## Writing

But where do I start with **writing**?

### Getting Started with Writing

Click to play video: <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/683534612/930196b849>

Video Transcript: <https://calp.ca/uploads/621e8f46e60d0.pdf>



Learners who have struggled with spelling all their lives may be reluctant to write and expose their difficulties, and they may be unable to write at all. If that is the case, you can dictate a paragraph and ask them to write it out. When done, ask them where they would put any punctuation.

You can be confident that a learner will benefit from technology as an accommodation to their learning if you see any of the following:

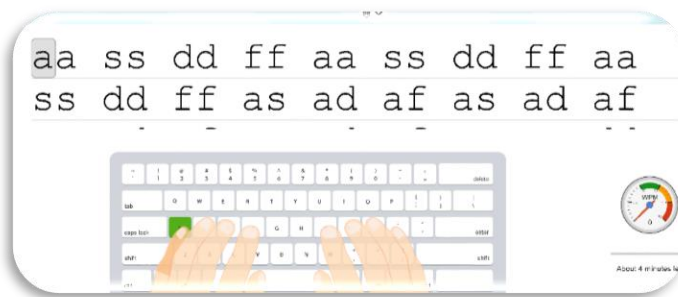
- Phonetic spelling
- Inability to write on a line
- Reluctance to write
- Inability to read what was just written.

Convince the learner that using technology can help develop writing skills. If the learner is unfamiliar with computers, you will want to begin with teaching some basic digital skills. Then you can introduce the programs that can support their writing practice and improve their writing skills. This is outlined in the five step plan that follows.

- 1) **Basic Computer Course** to familiarize the learner with a laptop.
- 2) **Basic Typing Course** (about 5 to 10 hours) to introduce the home row keys and the upper and lower rows keys. A practical and effective approach to touch typing can be accomplished using a course called Typesy. The company that produces the Typesy programs is working to create a program specifically suited to the adults served in CALPs; it should be ready for use in September 2021.

You can find their website here: [Typesy](#).

The program is designed to show in large font size as the learner practices. It shows finger placement on keys as the learner types.

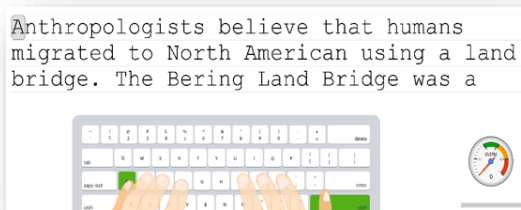


This is an example of a drill.

With the help of a facilitator, Typesy can be used to teach the alphabet, the space bar, and capital letters effectively.



The program includes practice games in which combined letters appear. This is an example of one of the games.



After the learner is introduced to the alphabet keys, they can move to paragraph typing in many subject areas. The subject areas include Science, Social Studies, English Language Arts, Math, and more.

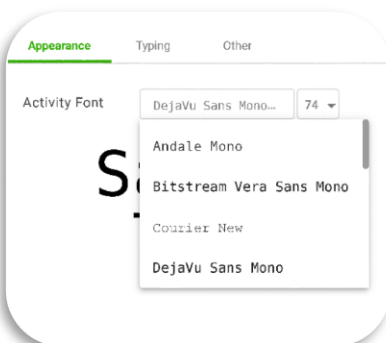
Sound can be turned on, so the words in the sentences are voiced for learners who struggle with reading and spelling.

Although the program includes games, most adults will do well by completing all the drills for the alphabet and then moving into course content areas for practice with typing paragraphs. If learners are struggling in the paragraph section, return to the games for more reinforcement.



The program comes with videos to introduce the lessons.

Program settings give the learner options to display the keyboard on the screen or remove it, turn on/off voiced sound, require typing of the correct key before they can move on, turn on/off the sound of keys struck, and the choice of a dark or light screen. Sound will be helpful for learners who struggle to identify individual letters in the alphabet.



Many fonts and font sizes can be selected as well. Liberation Mono may be the clearest font for your learners, but ensure your learner chooses the font best for them.



Settings include a dark screen option if learners prefer. Some adults with learning disabilities prefer this mode. Let the learner decide

A Typesy subscription will allow ten learners to sign up for \$40/year (\$4/year per learner). Payment is in US dollars.

This typing program will familiarize the learner with the use of the keyboard and increase their speed. After learning basic typing skills from this program, the learner will be able to progress to Speech Recognition, the next step in developing writing skills.

- 3) **Windows Speech Recognition (SR) Course:** The SR program allows the learner to speak to the computer, and the computer writes the words spoken. This technology can skyrocket a learner's ability to write. An example of a learner's progression is provided later in this part of the manual.

This program is available on all Windows 10 computers. Familiarize yourself with the program; then, teach it to your learners. Take notes on important aspects of the program as you learn it. Train your own computer to your voice. From there, it is easy to create your course and pass on to your learners the skills necessary to use it effectively. Here is a link to get you started: [How to use Speech Recognition in Windows](#).

- 4) **Write Right Course:** The Write Right program is developed for CALP learners and respects the persistent difficulties of learning disabilities. It shows how to place commas by identifying subjects and verbs and more. Learn this program; then, teach it! This is a 12–20-hour course available from Slave Lake Adult Education. Here is the link for more information: [Write Right](#).
- 5) **MS Word Document Checking Systems:** The most efficient accommodation for anyone who struggles with basic letter formation, spelling, and spatial difficulty is to develop efficient word processing skills. MS Word can pull the learner from the depths of writing inability to writing proficiency.

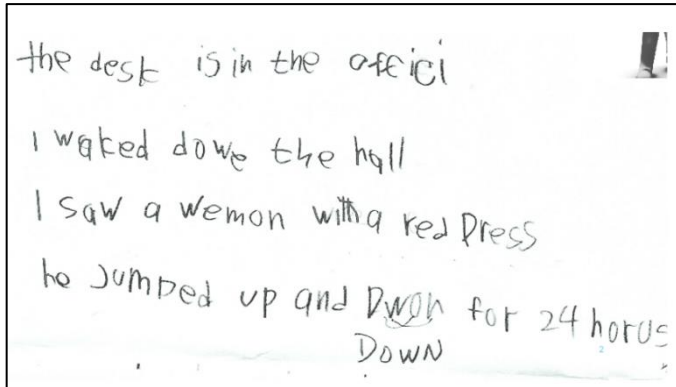
Learn about the built-in settings of MS Word yourself, and then teach it. Include spelling, grammar, and thesaurus checking in your lessons. Set the preferences for each learner. More detail on MS Word preferences is provided later in this part of the manual.



### A CALP learner's progression with Speech Recognition

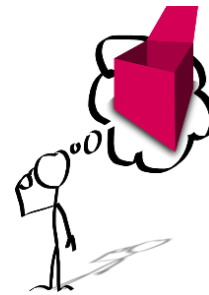
This is an example of an adult who could not produce even one sentence on his own with paper and pencil. The CALP practitioner dictated four sentences, with the result as shown:

- 1) The desk is in the office.
- 2) I walked down the hall.
- 3) I saw a woman with a red dress.
- 4) He jumped up and down for twenty-four hours.



As a facilitator, you could analyse this writing and decide that the learner needs practice with spelling, letter alignment/spacing, and sentence self-generating strategies. This conclusion would be a mistake. The learner who shared the writing sample had recently completed grade eleven, in the public school system, in regular classes in Alberta. He had years of spelling and writing practice. The example in the box was the result.

You can lead the learner to writing success by creating an equal opportunity to obtain the same result and the same level of achievement in the same amount of time, as your learners without disabilities.



Think outside the box for solutions.

An approach to writing for the learner could be **Windows Speech Recognition (SR)**. The same learner who produced the four sentences in the sample above produced the story in the sample below. He chose the topic and wrote it on his own. Even an adult with the most extreme difficulty with writing can blossom into a **prolific** writer overnight.

This was his first try, after a two-hour SR course, and the image is only half of his story:

A boy who lives in a small town in London was raised by his two parents. The boy lives very simple life. He goes to school and comes home and does his homework every day. But like a lot of families the boy's parents have money problems and would fight often. The boy fell like there was something he could do to help. So he took to the streets and quickly fell into a life of crime trying to help his parents. After a few weeks the boy ran into an old family friend from America his name was Tony. they started talking about the problems he and his family has been having. The boy told tony he has been stealing cars and bikes to help his family pay the bills. Tony laughs and says, "That's chump change kid" and tells the boy that he has a job coming and he will talk to his bosses about seeing if he can get him on the job to. A few weeks go by and the boy gets a call from tony and tells him. Hey kid meet me at the pub and ask for the owner and tell him your looking for me. The boy quickly ran to the pub and asked for tony the owners name was jack. Jack took the boy to a room in the back and seen tony and four other men all of them were wise guys from American. The boy sat down and tony starting telling the boy about the job they were doing. Boy were are going to rob a bank and need a gunman do you wanna be that guy you will get a cut of 15.000\$ if the job gose well. The boy sat there quiet for a few seconds and looked around and said yes. After a few days of planning the day has come. The boy tony and the four wise man entered the bank. Tony shot his gun in the air and yelled everyone on the floor. After everyone got on the floor tony told the bank teller to give him 500.000\$. As the money was being put in to a bag one of the security guards shot one of the wise guys. the boy quickly aimed his gun at the security guard but cloud not shoot him. Tony

**The transformation is a beautiful liberation to behold!**



## Using MS Word functions and settings to support writing

The most efficient accommodation for anyone who struggles with basic letter formation, spelling, and spatial difficulty is to develop efficient word processing skills. Every CALP needs laptops equipped with Microsoft Word. The laptops can be used at the CALP site or can be loaned to the learner. **The best purchase will be a laptop with a touch screen.** Consider the purchase as part of your course costs during budgeting.

Once your learner starts to write with the Speech Recognition program, you can concentrate on the areas still needing your expertise.

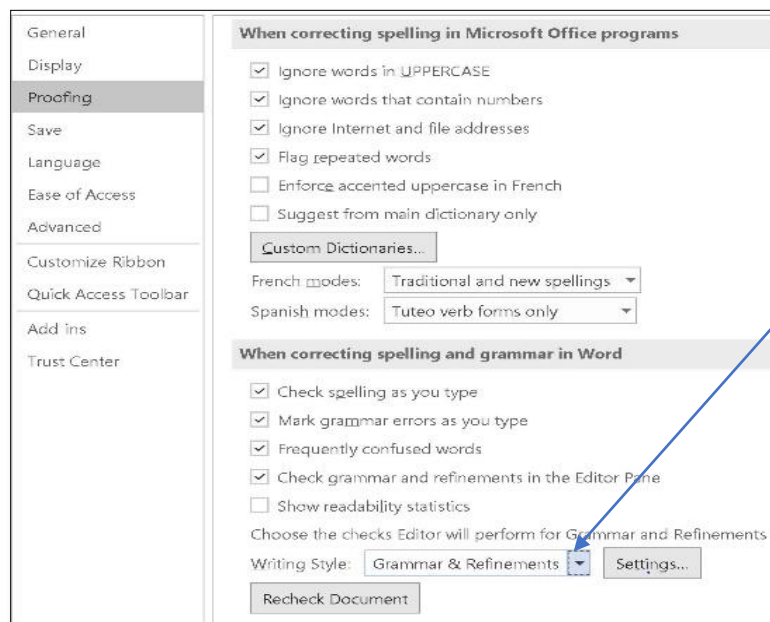
- Grammar
- Punctuation
- Writing types and styles
- Organization
- Editing
- Revising



**Be the first in the CALP system to create a writing course, universally designed, based on all the features offered in MS Word!**

For adults who struggle with writing, MS Word, paired with Windows Speech Recognition, can make the difference between writing or not writing. MS Word has the potential to transform the adult's life.

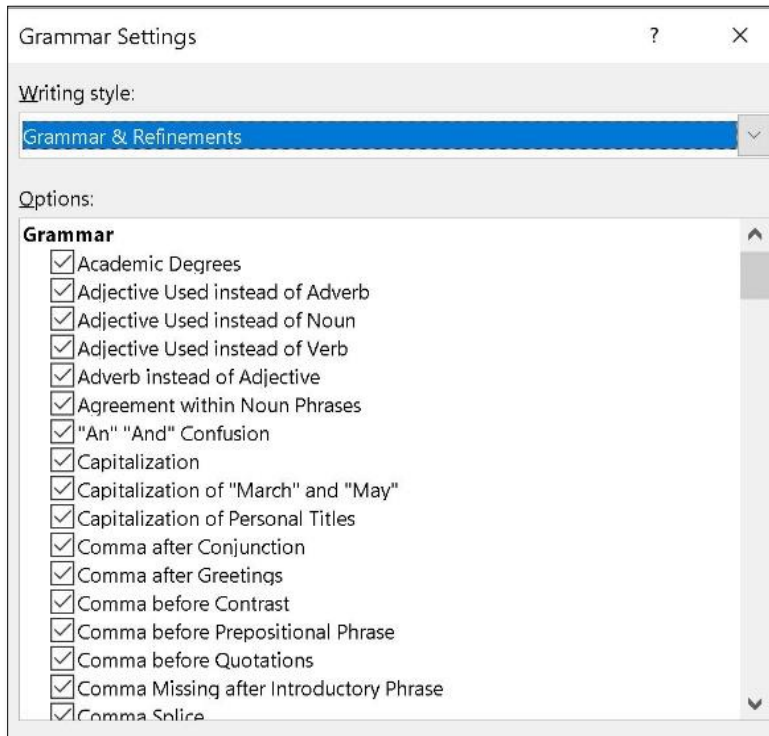
### *The settings in Microsoft Word:*



MS Word has powerful built-in settings that can be set to a specific learner's needs in the Proofing settings.

Proofing is just the beginning.

In the settings of Grammar & Refinements, selected from the Writing Style dropdown menu, the ability of the program seems endless. There are many categories. The Grammar category alone has over 60 headings to choose from.



After the Grammar heading, there are seven more option headings, each with its own list of particulars.

- Clarity
- Conciseness
- Formality
- Inclusiveness
- Punctuation
- Conventions
- Vocabulary

Additionally, MS Word has a spell checker feature. The spell checker in MS Word has the ability to identify misspelled words and gives options to choose from. **You may be surprised to know that adults can usually select the correct spelling of a word even when they cannot generate the spelling.** So, the spell checker is perfect for the adult with a learning disability.

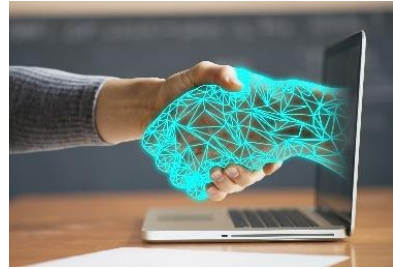
Keep going! MS Word also has a thesaurus, so teach your learner to upgrade their vocabulary using this tool. It is a perfect resource for vocabulary development, critical for higher reading and writing.

Show your adult learners the power that technology brings to their lives, while aligning at least two components of Alberta Advanced Education's CALP Guidelines (2020):

**Literacy:** *The ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute and use printed and written materials associated within varying contexts. (p.13)*

**Basic digital skills:** *The ability of individuals to understand and use digital systems, tools, applications and networks in order to access and manage information and thrive in learning, the workplace and daily life. (p.9)*

Technology is a key accommodation that allows equal access to education. As adults become more proficient in word processing skills, the door opens to advancement in all subjects.



The writing progression enabled by the digital skills outlined here has been tried and shown to be successful with adults with mild to moderate developmental disabilities and FASD. You are encouraged to present this progression to any learner who struggles with writing, and you will enjoy each success with your learners.



What if they need to write at work but are not allowed a computer or a computer is not practical?

**Job specific writing:** Move to electronic dictionaries. Franklin’s Language Master is a good product or use a cell phone dictionary. Find a suitable app. Apps that allow an individual to make and save a list of words that might be needed for work will ease so much pain and fear on the job.

Technology suggestions are listed in **Part 6** of this manual.

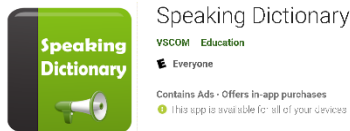
## Part 6

### TECHNOLOGY

Introduce your learners to assistive programs and apps, such as digital spell checking, dictionaries, calendars, and grammar checkers, on your program's and learner's devices (phones, tablets, laptops, computers). Keep looking for more assists for adults with learning disabilities.



Introduce your learners with reading difficulties to Read Aloud. It is a free extension, easily added to Google Chrome. They can use this more easily after taking the program Read with Sight & Sound. Reading print on website pages while listening to the words read aloud will continue to improve the reading level and the vocabulary development of the adult. Include how to use the Read Aloud extension as part of a computer course. Click here to get the extension: [Read Aloud](#).

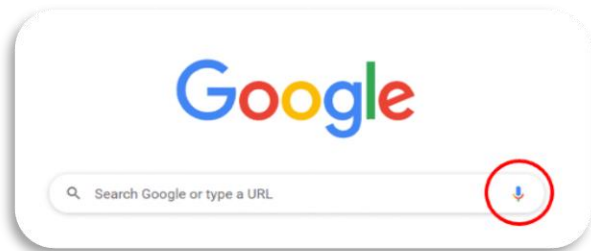


You could develop a course based just on the use of the Speaking Dictionary app as part of your basic digital skills. Teach all the components of this app to your learners. Show the adult how to navigate to the Google Play Store and download this app onto their phone. This app will read aloud the definition of words. The app is programmable for words your learner might need for a specific course or in the workplace. The words they search can be saved for later. Show them how to add their own vocabulary lists. The speech rate and voice can be adjusted, and it shows synonyms for the word entered. The learner simply presses on a microphone icon to hear the words and sentences. While using the app on a phone, a learner can access an instructional video to learn more about the app's usage. The video is available at this link: [Speaking Dictionary](#).



Add to your digital skills program the WhatsApp for a cell phone. It works like text, but you can record audio and video to send to family and friends. As well, you can send images that contain text; text can be added to the images after uploading them to the app. Use WhatsApp to communicate with friends and family face-to-face for free using your Internet connection. You can find it here: [WhatsApp](#).

**Handheld electronic dictionaries:** The brand **Franklin** has been the best producer of dictionary/thesaurus for adults having difficulty with spelling and reading. Franklin went out of business, but you can try to purchase some second hand from eBay or Amazon. Various models exist. The best speaking model was the LM 6000. A speaking model is necessary for the adult who struggles with spelling and reading. When a list of suggestions for a misspelled word appears, the adult can press the speak button to hear each word’s pronunciation. This feature allows the adult to choose the correct word. Try out other new brands and models. Look for devices that have great predictability at nailing phonetically spelled words!



**Google Voice Search:** Be sure to show learners how to search Google by clicking on the microphone and speaking the desired search subject.

Apple’s internet browser, Safari, also has Voice Control that will type text from speech on any Apple device (including iPhones, iPads and Mac computers).

## CONCLUSION

Remember, even though an individual may have some or many of the complex difficulties outlined in this manual, the learning challenges are traits the individual has, not who they are. Adults with learning disabilities have strengths and gifts that make them creative contributors to the fabric of our society. They are teachers, surgeons, doctors, actors, writers, inventors, mathematicians, scientists, and every other occupation or calling that exists. Many argue that it is the disability, the being wired differently, that makes them so creative. If you are lucky, you will learn as much from the adults you serve as they learn from you.

You have the power and the mandate to transform past failures and humiliations into successful, positive learning and personal growth. Your CALP can be instrumental in achieving positive change for adult learners through inclusive course development and learning facilitation.

Innovate and share your insights with the CALP system.

Serving adults with learning disabilities in your CALP may require you to re-think and expand your role as a practitioner. You are already passionately committed to the learners you encounter. If your CALP is not already inclusive in the appearance, programming, and delivery of courses, start now to transform your CALP.



This manual provides a few basics to start you developing and presenting in ways that will meet the needs of your adult learner. It is helpful to assume the role of detective as you discover the complexities of the adult learner in front of you. Remain open to what the learner tells you about what will work and what will not work for them. Remain flexible and ready to change course to meet the learner's individual needs.