

# Support Strategies for Specific Learning Differences

## 11 Support strategies for Developmental Language Disorder (DCD) also known as Specific Language Impairment (SLI)

Please find these strategies that may assist a child, teen or adult with ADHD. It is important to stress that a **formal identification** of a specific learning difference **is not a prerequisite** for putting these support strategies in place. It is also important to note that many of the strategies below will make learning more accessible to all individuals, whether they have an SpLD or not.

In these tips sheets, you will notice that a number of strategies are recommended for more than one SpLD. This is intentional and aims to highlight the overlapping nature of SpLD's and their associated challenges. For example, a strategy listed for ADHD may work equally as well for a student with dyspraxia.

Remember, there are no hard and fast rules. Be prepared to experiment, to talk through different ideas and strategies with your child, teen or adult, and to discover what works for them.

- 1.** **Break down** what you want the child or young person to do **into small steps**.
- 2.** **Try and keep instructions in sequential order.** Instead of saying, "Right, it's dinner time-- but before you come, can you tidy up please?" Say, "Things away, dinner time."
- 3.** **Leave time between instructions or information**, allowing a few seconds enables them to process what they have heard and formulate responses. You could call this 'thinking time'. It can help to tell them what to do in this time. "Have some thinking time; take a moment to think about what I've said."
- 4.** **Give them lots of visual clues** about what you want them to do, and to help understanding.
  - You could use your hands to gesture
  - Draw pictures or use photographs to help them
  - Where appropriate use symbols or signs
  - Use prompt cards (for example, a reminder to brush their teeth)
  - Visual timetables or checklists help with organisation
  - Label equipment and resources using pictures or symbols



## 5.

**Model what you want to hear.**

## 6.

**If a child says something in the wrong way, repeat the right way back to them instead of correcting them.** If a child says "Dog him sit..." repeat back, "Yes, the dog is sitting."

## 7.

**Add another word or two to help develop their language.** If a child says "That man walking" you could say "Yes, that man is walking on the grass."

## 8.

**Demonstrate useful social phrases:** "It looks like you want to join in....you could say 'Dean, can I have a turn please?'"

## 9.

**Teach new words and concepts** – children and young people with DLD need repetition and explanation.

- Link new words and ideas to what they already know "Enormous, that means very big. Remember the elephant we saw in the zoo? He was enormous."
- Look at the different aspects of words: What sounds are in it? What does it look like? What does it rhyme with? What do you do with it?
- Provide support for specific subject words, e.g. pin up words or word lists throughout the house.
- Try and use consistent vocabulary, e.g. take away, but not minus or subtract.

## 10.

**Try and avoid tricky parts of language**, like idioms: "I'm all ears" or metaphors: "Life is a journey" because they make language even more confusing. If you do use difficult words, idioms or jokes and see they are confused, explain what you meant.

## 11.

**Check understanding**, and with older children encourage them to check.

- You could ask them to tell you if there are any words that they did not know, and ask a couple of questions, for example "Where are you going to put it?" to make sure that they know what you have asked them to do.
- Give children short phrases to use to ask questions – "I'm not sure about.....", "Can you say it again, please."

