



Guidance and Resources for Parents of Children with Special Learning Needs

Your child needs to understand that we all learn differently and that there is no right or wrong way to learn. Each of us is different and each of us has our own unique way of learning with our own special needs.

The most important thing for a child with special needs is to keep to a set schedule. Treat the day as though your child is going off to school. Set a specific time for your child to get up, get dressed, and to eat breakfast before beginning their daily academics. Keeping to a set schedule will help your child feel safe and secure under these unprecedented times. Have your child work for 15- 20- 30-minute periods of time and then allow them to take a short break before continuing their work or before transitioning into the next subject area.

Learning Strengths and Preferences

Most of us tend to have strengths and preferences for learning and processing information through different channels (hearing, seeing, touching and doing). The following descriptions will be helpful in understanding and allowing your child with special needs to learn more effectively.

Auditory learners. Preference for learning is through verbal instructions from others, oral reading, discussions, books on tape, TV, radio, music, paraphrasing, and audiotapes to name a few. They remember through language and self-talk to get themselves through tasks and steps in problem-solving.

Visual learners. Preference for learning is by seeing, watching, and observing and they are strong in remembering visual detail. They would benefit from writing things down, circling information, underlining, color highlighting their texts, notetaking, and practicing with flashcards. Use of maps, films, visual samples and models, puzzles, matching activities, videos, demonstrations and computers are very helpful.

Tactile-Kinesthetic learners. Preference for learning is by doing, touching, and direct involvement. They are hands-on learners who need to be involved physically with projects and activities. They would benefit from drawing, learning games, acting out experiences, crafts, use of computers, and touching objects to help lock in learning through their sense of touch.

The most effective way to enhance memory and the ability to learn is by using a multi-sensory approach which incorporates the learning styles of visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile pathways simultaneously.



Accommodations to use at home for children with special needs

This section is designed to provide suggested accommodations to promote academic success for your child during home-based learning.

- Provide a carrel or partition to reduce visual distractions during seatwork.
- Use earphones to reduce auditory distractions while working.
- Have your child clear their working area of distractions.
- Make sure necessary supplies are available.
- If your child needs to have something in their hands to help with focus and attention, allow a piece of play dough, clay or a squishy ball.
- Use a timer to complete certain tasks and then reward your child for completion or on-task behavior during that time segment.
- Cover up parts of a page that is assigned as independent seatwork so your child does not get overwhelmed and give up or avoid the task. Breaking the assignment into smaller chunks helps to keep your child more motivated and on-task, as well as reduces frustration.
- Color highlight directions and important words on the assignment.

Google extensions that can be used to address a variety of needs for students using technology.

Open dyslexic Font for Chrome– Open-Dyslexic is an open sourced font created to increase readability for readers with dyslexia. This extension overrides all fonts on web pages with the OpenDyslexic font, and formats pages to be more easily readable.

Colorblinding – The Chrome extension Colorblinding will adjust the color on any website for specific colorblind issues.

VoiceNotell – Using VoiceNotell, students speak into the mic and the app types out the text which can be copied and pasted into any other document.

Move it – All students need brain breaks, and the Move It extension runs them for you. Students with this extension running will have all kinds of fun brain break tasks to do while working solo.

Speakit! – This extension can highlight words or sections of text and the app reads it to them. This is great for pronunciation, below grade level readers, and text accommodations.



Time management strategies to use for children with special needs

Children with special needs often have difficulty finishing assignments on time and can benefit from materials and practices that help them to improve their time management skills, including:

Use of a clock or wristwatch. Have your child use a clock or wristwatch to manage time when completing assigned work.

Use a calendar. Your child can use a calendar to schedule assignments.

Practice sequencing activities. Provide your child with supervised opportunities to break down a long assignment into a sequence of short, interrelated activities.

Create a daily activity schedule. Tape a schedule of planned daily activities to the refrigerator, your child's desk or some place in the house where it is visible.

Color-coded folders. Provide the child with color-coded folders to help organize assignments for different academic subjects (e.g., reading, mathematics, social science, and science).

Study skill techniques for students with special needs

Children with learning differences often have difficulty in learning how to study effectively on their own. The following strategies may assist your child in developing the study skills necessary for academic success:

Adapt worksheet. Help your child to fold their worksheet to reveal only one question at a time. They could also use a blank piece of paper to cover the other questions on the page.

Uncluttered workspace. Help your child prepare an uncluttered workspace to complete assignments by clearing away unnecessary books or other materials before beginning their seatwork.



Below are some suggestions and websites that you can use to help your child with special needs either remediate or enrich their academic skills. This is about stabilizing and maintaining your child's progress. So, be creative and have some fun with your child by using some of the suggestions and websites listed below.

Language Arts and Reading Comprehension

To help your child with special needs improve their reading comprehension skills, try the following practices:

Silent reading time. Establish a fixed time each day for silent reading – Drop Everything and Read

Storyboards. Ask your child to make storyboards that illustrate the sequence of main events in a story.

Storytelling. Schedule storytelling sessions where your child can retell a story that he or she has read recently.

Playacting. Schedule playacting sessions where your child can role-play different characteristics in a favorite story.

Word bank. Keep a word bank or dictionary of new or “hard-to-read” sight vocabulary words.

Board games for reading comprehension. Play board games that provide practice with target reading - comprehension skills or sight vocabulary words.

Computer games for reading comprehension. Schedule computer time for your child to have drill-and-practice with sight vocabulary words.

Phonics

To help your child with special needs master rules of phonics, try the following:

Board games for phonics. Play board games that allow your child to practice sounding out words

Computer games for phonics. Provide opportunities for your child to drill and practice with phonics or grammar lessons.

Picture-letter charts. Use these for your child to practice sounds and know the letters that go with them.



Websites for Reading

<https://classroommagazines.scholastic.com/support/learnathome.html> - Day by day projects for kids to keep reading, thinking and growing.

<https://www.readingrockets.org/newsletters/extras> Written especially for parents, Growing Readers provides monthly tips for raising strong readers and writers.

<https://www.storylineonline.net/> Selection of free stories read by actors

<https://bealearninghero.org/readiness-roadmap/> - Resources for parents- making learning at home fun

https://www.education.com/games/?cid=11.2144&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=outreach_message_3 – Free access for educational games for kids

Mathematics

To help your child with special needs build their skills in mathematics, try the following:

Mnemonics for basic computation. Teach your child mnemonics that describe basic steps in computing whole numbers. For example, “Don’t Miss Susie’s Boat: can be used to help your child recall the basic steps in long division (e.g., divide, multiple, subtract, and bring down)

Real-life examples of money skills. Provide your child with real-life opportunities to practice target money skills. Set up a home store where your child can purchase items and practice calculating change.

Color code math symbols. Color code basic math symbols, such as $+$, $-$, and $=$ which will provide a visual cue for your child when they are computing whole numbers.

Calculators to check basic computation. Ask your child to use a calculator to check addition, subtraction, multiplication, and dividing whole numbers.

Board games for basic computation. Have your child play board games to practice adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing whole numbers.



Computer games for basic computation. Schedule computer time for your child to drill and practice basic computation.

“Magic minute” drills. Have your child perform a quick (60 second) drill every day to practice computation of math facts, and have them track their own performance.

Solving Math Word Problems

To help your child with special needs improve their skill in solving word problems in mathematics, try the following:

Reread the problem. Teach your child to read a word problem *two times* before beginning to compute the answer.

Clue words. Teach your child clue words to identify which operation to use when solving word problems. For example, words such as “sum,” “total,” or “all together” may indicate an addition operation.

Guiding questions for word problems. Remind your child to ask guiding questions in solving word problems. For example: What is the question asked in the problem? What information do I need to figure out the answer? What operation should I use to compute the answer?

Real-life examples of word problems. Ask your child to create and solve word problems that provide practice with specific target operations, such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division. These problems can be based on recent, real-life events in your child’s life.

Use of Special Materials in Math

Children with special needs benefit from using materials to help them complete their math assignment, including:

Number lines. Provide a number line for your child to use when computing whole numbers.

Manipulatives. Use manipulatives to help your child gain basic computation skills, such as candies, cookies or cereal when adding single-digit numbers.

Graph paper. Have your child use graph paper to help organize columns when they add, subtract, multiple, or divide whole numbers. If you don’t have graph paper, take a piece of loose leaf and turn it sideward (horizontal) and you instantly have columns for your child to use for their math problems.



Websites for Mathematics

<https://greatminds.org/math/parents> - Free parent tips to help your child. These tip sheets include suggested strategies and models, key vocabulary, connections to previous learning, and tips for how you can support your child's learning at home.

<https://www.dreambox.com/> - Parents can get a FREE 90-day trial of DreamBox so students can learn math at home.

<https://www.education.com> – Free access to educational games for kids with online games and hands-on-activities for all grades and subject areas.

Additional Resources for Parents of Children with Learning Differences

www.understood.org - Supporting Parents Through the Journey

www.ldonline.org - Learning Disabilities Information for Families

www.parentcenterhub.org - Learning disabilities – Center for Parent

<https://childmind.org/coping-during-covid-19-resources-for-parents/>