



According to the [Learning Disabilities Association of America \(LDA\)](#), learning disabilities are neurologically-based processing issues that interfere with acquiring basic skills or more complicated planning, memory, attention, and organization skills (1). Learning disabilities include ADHD, dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, auditory processing disorder, visual perceptual/visual motor deficit, language processing disorder, non-verbal learning disabilities, memory disorders, executive functioning disorders, and dyspraxia. Different types of learning disabilities describe issues with one or more specific academic skills, like reading (dyslexia), writing (dysgraphia), or math (dyscalculia), and the brain's difficulty with processing, storing, or retrieving certain kinds of information.

Because of their association with academic performance, learning disabilities are most commonly diagnosed during the school years. Adults, however, can have learning disabilities as well. 1 in 5 Americans live with a learning or attention issue (2).



An intellectual disability, on the other hand, is a combination of significant issues with intellectual functioning (learning, reasoning) and adaptive behaviors (practical skills, social skills) (3). If a child has a learning disability, this does not necessarily mean that they have an intellectual disability, though some children with learning disabilities do also have intellectual disabilities.

Response to Intervention (RTI)

Generally, if a child is struggling academically, the child is provided with '[Response to Intervention](#)' services before being formally evaluated for a learning disability. The teacher assesses all of the students' skills, and the children who are struggling will usually be monitored by RTI specialists or an RTI team. The faculty will then provide classroom interventions to assist struggling students. RTI services help distinguish learning difficulties



due to poor schooling from learning difficulties related to learning disabilities specifically. If RTI services are ineffective, the child is then screened for learning disabilities as part of mandated [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#) protocols.

Learning disability evaluations

Students are [evaluated](#) for learning disabilities from trained professionals and with the consent of their parents or legal guardians. The evaluations are usually done by school psychologists, with the help of any specialists that may be necessary. Often, speech-language pathologists assist if part of the evaluation is related to language/communication issues (4). Each evaluation, by law, must gather information about all areas of “suspected disability.” The evaluation involves (5):

- Observing the child in the classroom
- Talking with the child
- A formal test
- Comprehensive overviews of the child’s school history and performance
- An analysis of medical history

People diagnosed with learning disabilities can do well academically, provided they receive quality instruction and are given the proper adaptive strategies for creating workarounds, often through an [Individualized Education Program \(IEP\)](#). Children with learning disabilities can have average or above-average intelligence and potential, but a learning disability can lower academic achievement (1). It is important to screen for learning disabilities properly, as an improper screen may diagnose a child as having an intellectual disability when they actually have a learning disability.

Related reading: learning disabilities

For more information on learning disabilities and intervention strategies, please visit the



following sites:

- [LDA America: Types of Learning Disabilities](#)
- [Understood.org: Learning Disabilities Overview](#)
- [Successful Strategies for Teaching Students with Learning Disabilities](#)
- [National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities: Responsiveness to Intervention and Learning Disabilities](#)
- [Individualized Education Plans \(IEPs\) for Disabilities](#)

Sources

Types of Learning Disabilities. (2018, April 18). Retrieved April 19, 2019, from <https://ldaamerica.org/types-of-learning-disabilities/>

Mission & History. (n.d.). Retrieved April 19, 2019, from <https://www.nclld.org/mission-and-history>

Frequently Asked Questions on Intellectual Disability. (n.d.). Retrieved April 19, 2019, from <https://aaid.org/intellectual-disability/definition/faqs-on-intellectual-disability>

How are learning disabilities diagnosed? (n.d.). Retrieved April 20, 2019, from <https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/learning/conditioninfo/diagnosed>

Morin, A. (n.d.). The Evaluation Process: What to Expect²⁰. Retrieved April 20, 2019, from <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/evaluations/evaluation-basics/the-evaluation-process-what-to-expect>