

Glossary of terms used in Specific Learning Disability

Audiology	A discipline spanning a number of functions including the testing and measurement of hearing
ADHD (Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder)	An attentional difficulty (sometimes accompanied by hyperactivity, but not always) which affects the ability to concentrate and/or sit still. Often treated with Ritalin, but also affected by diet, particularly Essential Fatty Acids.
Auditory discrimination	The ability to recognise the difference between similar sounding letters/words. Can be a physical difficulty (hearing) or a perceptual problem.
Auditory figure-ground	The ability to recognise important sounds or words against a background of noise.
Auditory memory	The ability to remember what is heard
Auditory perception	The way the brain makes sense of (processes) what is heard.
Auditory sequencing	The ability to determine the correct order of sounds in a word. Also, the ability to organise oral information in order.
Auditory syllabification	The ability to split a word into sound syllables.
Behavioural optometrist	A specialist optometrist who also looks at visual perception and eye tracking
Blending	The ability to combine individual sounds to make a word
CAPD	Central Auditory Processing Disorder. A neurological difficulty with processing auditory information.
Cognitive processing	The mental processes involved in thinking and learning, such as perception, memory, language, attention, concept formation and problem solving.
Cognitive task	A task which requires active thought or concentration (as opposed to one which can be completed automatically).
Concrete instruction	A method of teaching in which the student manipulates real objects in conjunction with appropriate verbalisation.
Cross (or mixed) laterality	Using the eye, ear or foot on the opposite side of the body from the preferred hand, e.g. left-handed, but right foot dominant.
Decoding	The ability to break a word down into its component letters (and sounds). i.e. reading
Developmental Delay	Slow and usually uneven maturing of a child.

Directionality	Knowledge of directions, e.g. right/left
Dominance	The tendency of one side of the body or limb to be more developed or preferred.
Dyscalculia	A total lack of understanding of mathematical or numeric principles.
Dyslexia	Specific Learning Disability. A neurological condition which primarily affects the ability to cope with written language.
Dyspraxia	A motor-planning disorder which can affect a number of areas, but primarily affects motor development and/or speech. Diagnosed by an Occupational Therapist. Shares many characteristics with dyslexia.
Encoding	The ability to work out the spelling of a word by its component sounds (i.e. spelling)
Eye tracking	Control of the muscles which affect the movement of the eyes. Needs to be smooth in order to be efficient for reading.
Fine motor	Small muscle movements, i.e. handwriting
Grapheme	The smallest unit of written language which represents a sound.
Gross motor	Movement of the larger muscles of the body, i.e. arms, legs
Hand-eye coordination	The ability to coordinate hands and eyes for tasks such as throwing, catching and copying
Kinaesthetic	Relating to movement
Kinaesthetic memory	Memory of muscle movements involved in an action
Mid-line	An imaginary line down the centre of a person's body from head to feet.
Motor	To do with body movement
Motor Planning	The neurological planning of movement. Usually problematic in dyspraxia
Non-verbal reasoning	Ability to solve visual problems or see and apply visual patterns. An aspect of intelligence which is not dependent on language processing ability.
Perception	The way the brain makes sense of incoming stimuli (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic)

Perceptual disorder	Difficulty in interpreting sensory stimuli
Phoneme	The smallest unit of sound
Phonics	A method of teaching spelling which depends on teaching the letter or letters which go with individual sounds and building/decoding words from that.
Phonological awareness	Awareness of sounds and sound patterns (rhyme) in language
Phonology	The sounds of a language
Proprioception	Also known as body image. The ability to relate body parts to each other and to the outside environment.
Segmentation	The ability to separate a word into individual sounds
Sensory integration	The combining of sensory input from several sensory channels
Syntax	Governing sentence structure and word order
Verbal reasoning	Ability to understand language concepts and solve verbal problems. An aspect of intelligence.
Visual discrimination	The ability to identify and process visual detail
Visual memory	The ability to accurately remember what is seen. Crucial for the acquisition of sight vocabulary
Visual perception	The identification, organisation and interpretation of what is seen.
Visual sequencing	The ability to put symbols (letters/numbers) in the correct order
Visuo-motor coordination	The ability to co-ordinate vision with the movements of the body (i.e. as is required in copying)
Visuo-spatial	The awareness of position in time and space. Involved in the understanding of spatial concepts (up, down, over, under, etc)
Word retrieval	The ability to retrieve words from the vocabulary. Often weak in dyslexics, but is also affected by stress, tiredness or distractions.
Working memory	The ability to retain <i>and process</i> information in memory. An aspect of auditory memory.