



Learning Disabilities and Accommodation Supports

Learning disabilities affect one or more of the ways that a person takes in, stores, or uses information. Learning disabilities come in many forms and affect people with varying levels of severity. Between 5 and 10 percent of Canadians have a learning disability.

Learning disabilities are a life-long condition – they do not go away – but can be coped with successfully by using areas of strength to compensate and accommodations such as technology. A quick example: a student could have a learning disability that affected her reading and understanding. She knows how to read, but the process of decoding the words and sentences takes so much effort that she comprehends little of what she's read. This student has learned that this is the case, and now records lectures to listen to later, and listens to audio-books on tape and CD. She has compensated by using her strong listening skills. Learning disabilities and their effects are different from person to person, so a person's pattern of learning abilities needs to be understood to find good, effective strategies for compensation.

For more information about learning disabilities visit the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario's website at: <https://www.ldao.ca>.

You can expect college to be very different from high school. The work will be more demanding – both in quality and in depth. There will be less class time, more study time, less feedback from instructors, and less supervision. On the one hand there will be more academic and personal freedom; on the other there will be more academic and personal responsibility. Levels of support available on campus will vary widely from minimal to satisfactory. However, with appropriate accommodations and support, and a lot of hard work, students with learning disabilities can have success at college.

Accommodations

If you require extra support with your learning, it is up to you to ensure that you receive the accommodations which are appropriate and necessary for you. Extra time for tests and exams is the most common request, and perhaps one of the easiest to satisfy. There should also be access to word processors, academic counselling and personal and financial counselling, if required. It is important for students with a learning disability to take advantage of all that the Student Support Centre at the college has to offer. Many students come to college planning to 'do it all by myself'. Make sure you ask for the support you need to be successful.

The types of accommodations for learning disabilities that are provided at college include:

- Extended time for tests and exams
- Reduced course load
- Course counselling
- Electronic or taped textbooks
- Text-to-voice software
- Voice-to-text software
- Reader (support person)
- Scribe for oral work (support person)
- Specialized organizational tour
- Tape recording of lectures

Before you meet with someone from Student Services at the college, think about what you need help with and what strategies might support you. For example:

- I have a hard time focusing when there is a limited amount of time. I could use extra time for a test.
- I have a hard time focusing when there are distractions. I would like to have tests in a separate room by myself.
- I have a hard time taking notes when someone is talking. I would like to have someone in the class share their notes with me.