

## **Job Accommodation Ideas for People with Learning Disabilities**

by Dale S. Brown

### **Reasonable Accommodations**

The term "reasonable accommodations" refers to changes in the workplace that enable people with disabilities to effectively perform the tasks associated with their job. Accommodations can help people with learning disabilities do their job well, even when their disability gets in the way.

Accommodations can include variations in:

- work space and equipment needed to do the task,
- communication of the work,
- the tasks themselves, and
- the time and place that the work is done.

### **Choosing the Right Accommodation(s)**

1. Analyze the task that is giving you difficulty. Be exact about the nature of the problem.
2. Analyze the aspect of your disability that is contributing to the difficulty.
3. Brainstorm solutions. Consider changes in the work environment, your work style, your communication style, that of your supervisor, and the job itself.
4. Implement one of the solutions.
5. Assess whether the accommodation is meeting your needs. Be sure to share feedback with your supervisor and implement any necessary adjustments in work routines in order to sustain your success.

If you need suggestions, call the [Job Accommodation Network](#) (JAN), a project of the U.S. Department of Labor, at 800-526-7234. JAN consultants have a database of over 200,000 possible accommodations and may be able to give you more ideas once they are familiar with your specific situation.

### **Possible Problems & Solutions**

#### **You have difficulty reading.**

- Install text-to-speech software on your work computer. Windows® has a built-in text-to-speech feature. From the Home button, go to "All Programs," then "Accessories," then "Ease of Access," then "Narrator." Or download free software such as [Natural Reader](#).
- Request that your boss give you oral rather than written directions.
- Ask that important information be highlighted.
- Discuss reading material with co-workers.
- Make drawings, diagrams, and/or flowcharts as you read to help organize the information.

#### **You lose things frequently.**

- Organize your work area and keep it that way!
- Put important objects, such as keys, in the same place each time you use them.
- Color code items.
- Keep things on shelves, bulletin boards, or other places that are visible; avoid storage in drawers or cupboards.
- Attach important objects to the place they belong.



### You have difficulty following spoken directions.

- Ask people to tell you important information slowly and clearly and in a quiet location.
- Ask people to write things down.
- Request that people follow-up their conversations with an e-mail note.
- Ask people to demonstrate tasks, then watch you do it.
- Take notes and ask your supervisor to review them, or write a memo that summarizes the information. With smart pens that have built-in recorders, you can transfer everything you write and hear to your computer so you can see and hear them later.
- Repeat instructions back to people, making sure they verify that your interpretation is correct.
- Record important procedures and instructions so you can playback and review as needed.

### You forget deadlines.

- Use Web-based reminder systems such as [Remember-the-Milk](#) which sends you reminders via e-mail, instant message, or text message.
  - Use a voice organizer or cell phone to remind you of scheduled events. Some voice mail systems and cell phones have scheduling reminders that ring at a specific time and even play a reminder message.
  - Organize files by due dates.



### You have difficulty staying on task when there are interruptions.

- Put up a "Do Not Disturb" sign when you really need to work without interruption.
- Do one task at a time. Do not start a new one until the current one is complete.

- Ask your supervisor to clarify priorities.
- Request to work in a location that is away from noise and busy office traffic.

### You have difficulty with spelling and grammar.

- Use spell check and grammar check software.
- Use word-prediction software.
- Use text-to-speech software and listen to what you write. Hearing your words may highlight mistakes.
- Ask a colleague to proof your work, but only those documents that must be proofed.

### You tend to reverse or confuse numbers.

- Say each number aloud as you write or type it to ensure that it is correct.
- Do calculations twice, checking to see if the answers are the same.
- Use a talking calculator.

### You have short-term memory problems.

- Use mnemonic devices to remember sets of information.
- Create charts or graphic organizers that allow you to quickly find the information you want.
- Use web tools such as [Evernote](#) which allow you to copy and paste information from websites, create diagrams, record information, and add comments and tags to information that you find.
- Think about new information and try to associate new ideas with facts that are already familiar.
- Use a miniature recorder, voice organizer, or a smart pen with a recorder to record what you need to remember.

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