**Do you suspect that your child has a reading difficulty or learning disability?**

When a child is having a difficulty with reading, language learning, or other kinds of academic skills, the reason might be simple to understand and deal with or it might be complicated and require expert help. Often, children may just need more time to develop their academic skills. Children learn differently and at different rates, and it's normal for children to experience ups and downs. Some kids need extra time, especially if they're also learning a second language.

On the other hand, some children might have trouble seeing, hearing, or speaking. Others may have a learning disability in areas such as reading, writing, or math. If you think your child may have some kind of physical or learning problem, it's important to try to learn more about what's behind them and get expert help if needed so that she doesn't get too far behind.

While there is no one sign that shows that a person has a learning disability, there are some signs and patterns that may indicate a learning disability if your child exhibits them frequently and/or over an extended period of time. These signs are listed in [Learning Disabilities: An Introduction for Parents](http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/27925#signs).

**What you can do**

If you are concerned that your child may have a learning disability, here are some steps you can take:

**Be aware of how your child is doing, especially compared to other children his age.**

It is important to keep an eye on how your child is progressing, and discuss changes or concerns with his teacher.

**Trust your intuition!**

You know your child best. If you suspect a problem, speak with your child's teacher and school personnel, look for information, and do not be afraid to have her evaluated right away. The sooner you get your child help if she has a learning disability, the sooner she will be able to start to overcome it.

**Meet with your child's teacher and guidance counselor.**

Your child's teacher will be able to tell you how she is doing at school and how she is interacting with peers, as well as help to arrange an evaluation. Establishing a positive relationship with your child's teacher will help both of you do what is best for your child. Some questions that will be helpful to ask include:

* Do you think my child is having trouble with reading?
* What specific trouble is my child having?
* What can I do to help my child at home?
* What can be done to help my child in class?
* Which reading group is my child in?
* How is he or she doing compared to other students?

**Ask for an interpreter if needed.**

If you're not comfortable with English, please someone to interpret for you or bring a friend or relative to do so at meetings with teachers, counselors, and professional experts.

**Talk to your child's doctor.**

Make sure your child's doctor or other health care provider checks your child for hearing or vision problems. Sometimes reading or academic problems are caused by problems with seeing or hearing.

**Evaluations**

If you decide that your child needs [an evaluation](http://www.ldonline.org/indepth/evaluation), here are some important steps to take:

**If your child is between the ages of 0-2 years, get in touch with an early intervention agency.**

These agencies offer services for infants and children with special needs in your state.These are services for infants and children, designed to identify and treat any problem or delay as soon as possible. The early intervention services may be offered by a public or private agency. Make an appointment for the agency to conduct an evaluation free of charge.

The National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities has an archived website which features [extensive information in Spanish](http://www.parentcenterhub.org/nichcy-gone/).

**If your child is a preschooler, call** [**Child Find**](http://www.childfindidea.org/)**.**

Call the main office of your local school district and ask for the "Child Find" program. This federal program requires school districts to give preschoolers a comprehensive assessment for free if a problem is suspected.

**If your child is between the ages of 3-21 years, ask for an evaluation from the school.**

The evaluation will be conducted by the special education department. Special education is instruction designed specifically to meet the needs of children with disabilities. The school should evaluate your child at no cost to you.

**Ask for an evaluation in your child's native language.**

There is a law — the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) — that requires evaluations to be given in a student's native language. If your child is assessed in English and you feel that she should be assessed in a different language, speak with your child's teacher, principal, special education teacher, or counselor. Read more about [IDEA](http://www.ldonline.org/features/idea2004) at LD OnLine.

The purpose of such testing is to find out whether a child's learning difficulty is due to 1) second language learning, 2) language delay, or 3) a learning disability.

**Consider an evaluation from outside the school.**

If the school will not evaluate your child, or they evaluate your child and you think you need a second opinion, consider going to a specialist outside of the school. They can do an "independent education evaluation." Contact your local Parent Training and Information Center or a Parent Resource Center. These centers can advise you on how to get a free "independent education evaluation." They will also have lists of low-cost, Spanish-speaking professionals who may be able to help. Click here to find the centers in your state.

**Don't give up!**

Try not to assume — or let others assume — that your child is having difficulty only because he or she is learning two languages. Keep asking for help until your child receives the she needs.

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