



Guide material

For supporting and guiding a student with special needs

Learning difficulties in general

1. Roughly 5-10 % of people have some individual learning difficulties.
2. Learning difficulties typically appear in overlapping combinations.
3. Each student has their individual needs of support and their own support measures.
4. Learning difficulties manifest differently in different phases of life.
5. Learning difficulties and weak basic skills typically lead to underperforming.
6. A person may have extensive and developed masking and coping strategies.
7. A person with learning difficulties usually has some type of special knowledge, that gets easily overlooked.
8. Open communication, multiprofessional cooperation, sufficient guidance and support play a significant role in allowing a person to successfully become a part of society.

More information at: [Information about learning and learning difficulties – Niilo Mäki Institute](#)



Good practices for learning and guidance

1. Ask the student how they feel they learn best.
2. Introduce the places and people to the student.
3. Give the student an example of an assignment, demonstrate.
4. Make the goal and schedule of the assignment clear to the student.
5. Create a clear schedule and leave room for breaks.
6. Section the instructions and guide the student step by step.
7. Repeat the instructions if necessary.
8. Provide the student with additional graphic or written instructions, if necessary.
9. Make sure that the instructions have been understood; ask the student to repeat the assignment instructions and schedule in their own words.
10. Stay calm, create a safe atmosphere.
11. Cheer the student on and encourage them, give feedback on success.
12. Tell the student to ask for help without hesitation.

More information at: [The Finnish Diverse Learners' Association](#)



Different needs of support and guidance tips

1. Visual-perceptual difficulties
2. Difficulties with attention and focus
3. Language difficulties
4. Mathematical learning difficulties
5. Mental disorders
6. Autism spectrum

More information (in Finnish) at: [Perustietoa oppimisvaikeuksista - oppimisvaikeus.fi](https://www.opimisvaikeus.fi)



1. Visual-perceptual difficulties

Visual-perceptual difficulties can manifest as:

- difficulties in visual or audible perception or perceiving the surrounding space
- difficulties in estimating spatial relations and directions
- difficulties in perceiving entireties and the big picture
- difficulties in recognizing details
- weak working memory, difficulties in understanding verbal instructions and time management

The student may benefit from:

- a calm environment, a leisurely atmosphere
- being shown an example
- sectioning assignments and instructions into smaller bits
- written/graphic instructions
- a clear schedule and assignments
- phone and computer reminders
- highlighting/underlining important information



More information (in Finnish) at: [HAHKU – Hahmottamisvaikeuksien tietopalvelu](#)



2. Difficulties with attention and focus (e.g. ADHD or ADD)

Difficulties with attention and focus (ADD/ADHD) can manifest as:

- difficulty to focus, follow instructions and finish assignments
- absent-mindedness and forgetting items
- varying performance
- getting distracted by external stimuli
- potential challenges in social relations and self-coordination
- tardiness, getting lost in thought

Hyperactivity and impulsivity (ADHD) can manifest as:

- difficulty to stay still
- constant movement, fiddling with items
- restlessness, talking and acting before thinking
- interrupting, disturbing and talking over others

The student may benefit from:

- a clear working pace, breaks for movement
- a clear schedule and assignments
- visual instructions, clock, calendar, reminders and to-do-lists
- material to fiddle with, a cap, noise-canceling headphones/ listening to music
- a working place free of disturbance, own working area, minimizing surrounding stimuli
- varying assignments
- immediate feedback

More information at: [Information about ADHD](#)



3. Language difficulties

Language difficulties can manifest as:

- mistakes while and aversion to reading out loud and producing text
- difficulties in reading comprehension and understanding long instructions
- a limited vocabulary
- mixing up letters, numbers and directions
- mixing up dates and times

The student may benefit from:

- plain language, giving instructions one step at a time
- the possibilities of IT, e.g. reading and dictation applications, using the immersive reader
- graphic material, distribution of written material beforehand
- taking pictures of notes
- the possibility to answer out loud instead of writing
- additional time for written assignments



More information (in Finnish) at: [Lukihäiriö - Tervetuloa Lukihäiriö.fi -sivustolle! \(lukihairio.fi\)](https://lukihairio.fi)



4. Mathematical learning difficulties

Mathematical learning difficulties can manifest as:

- anxiety related to mathematics
- persistent problems with learning basic calculations
- difficulties of understanding mathematical symbols and estimating amounts or units of measurement
- difficulty of comprehending long number sequences
- difficulty of understanding the idea behind calculations and verbal assignments

The student may benefit from:

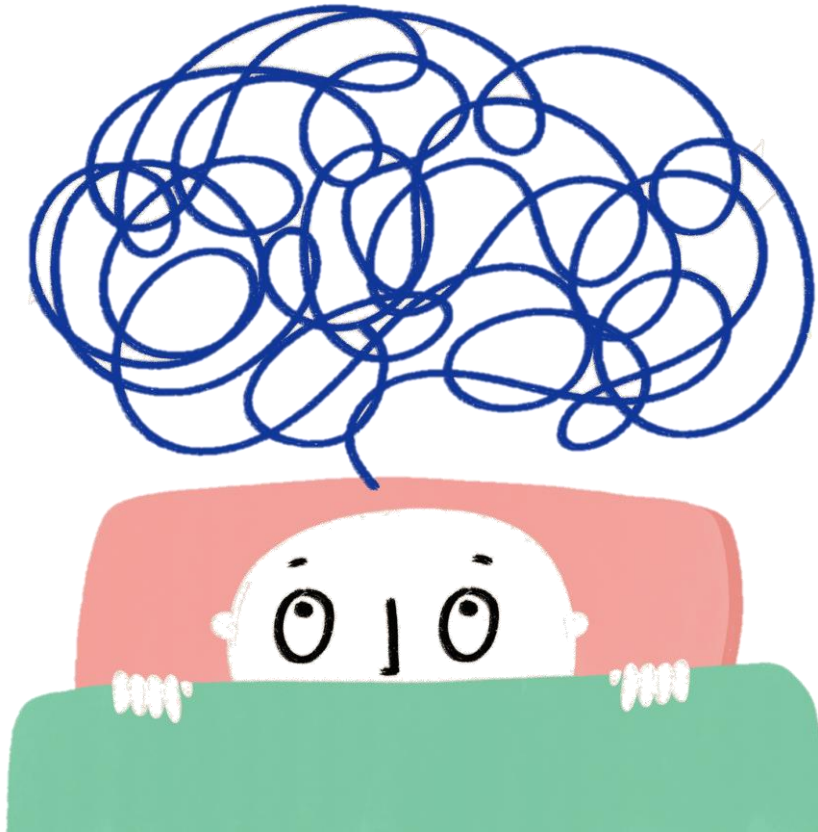
- diverse teaching strategies
- illustrative materials
- visualizing verbal assignments
- enforcing basic skills and mathematical concepts
- individual guidance
- using a calculator and applications



More information (in Finnish) at: [Matematiikka - oppimisvaikeus.fi](https://matematiikka-oppimisvaikeus.fi)



5. Mental disorders



Mental disorders can manifest as:

- depression and anxiety/panic disorders
- difficulties in focusing and remembering, lack of initiative
- decreased stress tolerance, heightened irritability
- withdrawnness, lack of social skills
- absence, tardiness

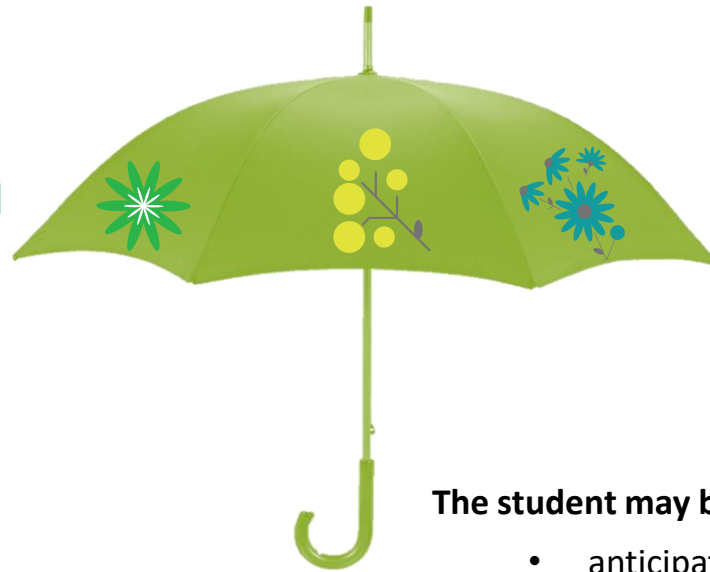
The student may benefit from:

- planning a course of action together with the student
- possible individual goals and schedule
- clear (visual) instructions and schedule
- reminders to help perceive time
- working side by side, sufficient support
- sequenced assignments, breaks
- a safe and calm atmosphere

More information at: MentalHub.fi



6. Autism spectrum



Autism spectrum disorders can manifest as:

- tendency to take matters literally
- sensitivity to changes and stress
- challenges to make eye contact and interpret the facial expressions and gestures of others
- difficulties of coordination
- sensory hypersensitivity
- special interests
- dependency on routines, getting stuck

The student may benefit from:

- anticipating, structuring and visualizing things
- clear and accurate assignments and schedule
- instructions on what happens, where, when and with whom
- getting notified about changes early on
- plain language, avoiding figures of speech
- sufficient amount of time, a calm and leisurely atmosphere
- using sunglasses and noise-canceling headphones
- a working area free of disturbance, own working area, minimizing external stimuli

More information (in Finnish) at: [Autismiliitto](#)





If you have any questions,
feel free to contact me!

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