



National
Center for
Learning
Disabilities

PARENT GUIDE

QUESTIONS TO ASK EDUCATORS IF YOUR CHILD IS STRUGGLING

Overview

Every child can have problems learning from time to time, and parents are often the first to notice. Some learning problems come and go. But if they seem to persist, it's important for parents to communicate with their child's teachers and other caregivers about difficulties. Grades and comments on report cards can be helpful as a conversation starter. They reflect school performance over time and indicate how well a child is meeting learning expectations. It's also helpful when parents keep records (e.g., work samples) and take notes of things they observe—even for children as young as 4 or 5. Parents can share their specific concerns with teachers and other specialists, offering perspective about how long their child has been struggling. More information is always best when preparing to make important decisions about how to help children succeed across all areas of learning and behavior.

If you think your child is having difficulty, talk to your child's teacher about what can be done to help your child succeed. You can ask whether some sort of screening or comprehensive evaluation is needed, and if so, how to begin the process. Here are some sample questions to get the discussion going:

READING/WRITING



Pre-K Reading/Writing

1. I notice my child has trouble connecting letters to the sounds they make. What are some ways to improve this skill?
2. My child seems to struggle with holding a pencil. Is there some way to help develop this skill?
3. I notice my child has trouble writing letters and copying words. What activities can we do to work on this?
4. My child doesn't seem to understand how rhyming works and is confused when asked to say what sound a particular letter makes in simple words. Is this going to be a problem when formal reading instruction begins?
5. My child seems to have a lot of trouble developing skills needed for reading and writing. Should I request screening or testing to understand why?
6. Where can I get more information on the screening process? Who is the best contact person?



Grades K–4 Reading/Writing

1. I notice my child has trouble distinguishing between similar looking letters. Is this typical for children at this age?
2. I notice my child has trouble recognizing common “sight words.” What are some ways we can improve this skill?
3. I notice my child frequently loses their place while reading. Is this typical for children at this age?
4. I notice my child reads slowly and sometimes skips over words. Are there any activities we can do to work on this?
5. I notice my child has messy handwriting. What activities can help improve this skill?
6. I notice my child doesn’t always spell words correctly. Do you see the same issue with my child’s peers?
7. My child seems to have a lot of trouble with reading and writing. Can we discuss what screening has been done, or could be done, and then review the results together?
8. Where can I get more information on the screening process? Who is the best contact person?



Grades 5–8 Reading/Writing

1. I notice my child often doesn’t understand or remember key information from reading assignments. Are there strategies to help improve this skill?
2. I notice my child is struggling to learn new vocabulary in areas like science, world history, and math. Are there any strategies to help with this?
3. I notice my child has difficulty preparing outlines and organizing written assignments. What are some ways to improve this skill?
4. I notice my child has trouble developing ideas in writing (e.g., written work is incomplete, too brief, or disorganized). Is this typical for children at this age?
5. I notice my child still has trouble with different reading tasks and is still reading slowly. Are there any activities to work on this?
6. What sort of technology can help my child with reading and writing tasks?
7. My child seems to have a lot of trouble with reading and writing. What screening or evaluation options are available to better understand why this is happening? Who is the best contact person?



High School Reading/Writing

1. I notice my child is struggling to learn new vocabulary, especially technical terms in areas like science, world history, and math. Are there any strategies to help with this?
2. I notice my child has difficulty taking notes, preparing outlines, and organizing written assignments. What are some ways to improve this skill?

3. I notice my child has trouble developing ideas in writing (e.g., written work is incomplete, too brief, or disorganized). Is this typical for children at this age?
4. What sort of technology can help my child read and write?
5. My child still doesn't read or write very well, and I suspect that an underlying learning disability may be the reason. What options are available to get an evaluation process started? Who is the best contact person?

MATH



Pre-K Math

1. I notice my child has trouble with simple counting. What are some ways to improve this skill?
2. I notice my child has trouble making a good guess about the number of things. Is this typical for children at this age?
3. I notice my child has trouble comparing the number of different things. Are there any activities that can help develop this skill?
4. I notice my child has trouble identifying different shapes. Is this something I should be worried about?
5. My child seems to have a lot of trouble developing skills around math. Should screening or testing be done at this time to understand why?
6. Where can I get more information on the screening process? Who is the best contact person?



Grades K–4 Math

1. I notice my child has difficulty learning to calculate and memorize basic addition, subtraction, and multiplication facts. What are some ways to improve these skills?
2. I notice my child has difficulty counting by groups (e.g., by 2, 5, 10, 100). Is this typical for children at this age?
3. I notice my child has trouble lining numbers up in the correct places (e.g., one on top of the other) and understanding place value when doing calculations. Are there any activities we can do to improve these skills?
4. My child seems to have a lot of trouble with math. Can we discuss what screening has been done, or could be done, and then review the results together?
5. Where can I get more information on the screening process? Who is the best contact person?



Grades 5–8 Math

1. I notice my child has trouble learning and applying formulas and rules for calculation and problem solving. What are some ways to improve this skill?
2. I notice my child has trouble reading and interpreting graphs and charts. Is this typical for children at this age?
3. What sort of technology can help my child with math?
4. My child seems to have a lot of trouble with math. What screening or evaluation options are available to better understand why this is happening? Who is the best contact person?



High School Math

1. My child still doesn't seem to do very well in math. My child can do calculations but seems to have trouble with math words and concepts. Should I have my child evaluated for a learning disability, and if so, how can I get this process started?
2. What sort of technology can help my older child with math?

ATTENTION



Pre-K Attention

1. I notice my child has trouble paying attention even when doing something enjoyable. What are some ways to improve this skill?
2. My child seems to have a lot of trouble with paying attention. What screening or evaluation options are available to understand why this is happening?



Grades K–4 Attention

1. I notice my child has difficulty following through on instructions and doesn't finish schoolwork or chores. What are some ways to improve this skill?
2. I notice my child has difficulty organizing tasks and activities. Is this typical for children at this age?
3. I notice my child constantly loses things that are necessary for tasks/activities (e.g., toys, school assignments, pencils, books, or tools). Are there any activities or strategies that can improve performance in this area?
4. My child seems to have a lot of trouble with paying attention. What screening or evaluation options are available to understand why this is happening?



Grades 5–8 Attention

1. I notice my child is having difficulty keeping track of different classes, assignments, or materials. Are there some strategies that can help in this area?
2. I notice my child is spending a great deal of time on tasks, but the work is often of poor quality or incomplete. Are there strategies that can help with this?
3. My child seems not to pay close attention to details and often makes what looks like careless mistakes. What are some ways to improve this skill?
4. My child seems to have a lot of trouble with paying attention. What screening or evaluation options are available to understand why this is happening? Who is the best contact person?



High School Attention

1. My child still doesn't seem to do very well with paying attention. What screening or evaluation options are available to understand why this is happening?

MORE RESOURCES

This parent guide is just one of a series of resources that NCLD created as part of The LD Checklist: Recognize and Respond tool. This includes:

- **[The LD Checklist: Recognize and Respond](#)**: This interactive tool builds upon the most recent research so parents and other caregivers can determine whether a child is at risk for, or shows signs of, having learning disabilities. The more characteristics checked, the more important it is to seek clarification about the presence of underlying learning disabilities.
- **[The Importance of Early Screening](#)**: This resource provides information on what a screening is and why screening for learning difficulties is important.
- **[Parent Guide: Questions to Ask Pediatricians If Your Child Is Struggling](#)**
- **[Resources From Our Partners](#)**: In collaboration with researchers, neuroscientists, and other experts, we've created a collection of high-quality resources that is easy to use and helpful to a range of care providers.

To access all of the resources, visit www.nclid.org/LDChecklist.

National Center for Learning Disabilities

For more information, visit www.nclid.org or contact NCLD via email: info@nclid.org

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