



National
Center for
Learning
Disabilities

PARENT GUIDE

QUESTIONS TO ASK PEDIATRICIANS 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. Pediatric health care providers are interested in your child's educational health, too—not just their physical well-being. If you're concerned about your child's progress in school, be sure to talk with your child's health care provider. They can help you figure out if your child's struggle is suggestive of a learning disability, and they can help you decide if testing is needed.

If you think your child is having difficulty, talk to your child's pediatrician about whether your child might need specialized instruction and support to be successful. Here are some sample questions to get the discussion going:

READING/WRITING



Pre-K Reading/Writing

1. My child seems not to be interested in reading and writing activities. Is there something I can do, or should I wait and see if things change once formal schooling begins?
2. My child seems to have a lot of trouble with reading and writing. Should I be worried? How can I request screening for learning difficulties in this area?
3. My child's teacher said that I should have my child do more reading at home because this seems to be an area of weakness. Does this mean my child might have dyslexia?
4. Should I be concerned if a teacher said that my child is "not making enough progress"?



Grades K–4 Reading/Writing

1. My child only reads when it's required by a teacher. Is this OK or should I be concerned?
2. My child is having a hard time connecting the sounds of words and their letters. What should I do?
3. My child is able to sound out words, but the process is hard and progress is really slow. If my child doesn't like reading, or isn't good at it, should I ask for an evaluation?
4. My child is able to sound out words but often doesn't understand what is read. Is this a problem?
5. Should I be worried if my child's report card says "not making enough progress"? What should I ask the school to do?



Grades 5–8 Reading/Writing

1. The quality of my child’s work in reading and writing seems inconsistent: good one day and terrible the next. Should I be concerned? If so, what can I do?
2. My child seems to have a lot of trouble with reading and writing. Should I ask for screening for learning disabilities in this area?
3. My child has difficulty with reading and writing, makes a lot of spelling errors, and doesn’t write complete and grammatically correct sentences. What should I do?
4. Even though my child can spell words and write sentences, there’s always resistance when it comes to writing paragraphs and compositions. Is this typical at this age?
5. Should I be worried if my child’s report card says “not making enough progress”? What should I ask the school to do?



High School Reading/Writing

1. My child still doesn’t read or write very well. Why has my child not been able to improve these skills? Can my child be evaluated for learning disabilities in these areas? If so, who can do the testing?
2. What kind of details about my child’s struggle with learning would be helpful to share with school personnel? How important is it to include my child in this discussion?

MATH



Pre-K Math

1. My child is having trouble with simple counting. Should I be concerned, or is this something that will likely improve by itself over time?
2. My child seems to have a lot of trouble understanding how numbers work. Should I ask for a screening or evaluation in this area?
3. My child can’t tell which is bigger when given two numbers. Should I be worried about this?
4. My child can count but doesn’t seem to understand that one number is “more” and one number is “less.” Should I be worried?
5. When should I be worried if a teacher said that my child is “not making enough progress”?



Grades K–4 Math

1. My child is much better at reading and writing than at math. Why would this happen, and should I be concerned?
2. My child seems to have a lot of trouble learning different types of math. Should my child be screened for possible learning disabilities in this area?
3. My child can count numbers and knows which number is “bigger” and which is “smaller,” but can’t add or subtract. Do I need to be worried about this?
4. The teacher said that my child is having difficulty with counting but will catch up. How long should I wait before I ask for an evaluation?
5. My child is able to add and subtract most numbers, but is struggling with multiplying or dividing. What should I do?
6. Should I be worried if my child’s report card says not “making enough progress”? What should I ask the school to do?



Grades 5–8 Math

1. I’m not familiar with how math is taught at school, so I can’t help when my child struggles with math homework. What should I do when my child needs help with math at home?
2. My child can add, subtract, multiply, and divide most numbers, but makes a lot of mistakes when a math problem has several steps. Is this typical?
3. My child struggles with many types of math (e.g., word problems, geometry, fractions, decimals, percentages). What steps can I take to ensure that my child receives the right kind of support?
4. My child seems to have a lot of trouble with math. Should my child be screened for possible learning disabilities in this area?



High School Math

1. My child still doesn’t seem to do very well in math, but no one has suggested being tested for a possible learning disability. What should I do?
2. What kind of details about my child’s struggle with learning would be helpful to share with school personnel? How important is it to include my child in this discussion?

ATTENTION



Pre-K Attention

1. My child frequently needs reminders to pay attention. Is this typical of young children? Should I be concerned about this becoming a problem when formal schooling begins?
2. I always need to remind my child what to do. Is it normal for children to be so forgetful at this age?
3. I've noticed that my child seems to have a lot of trouble with paying attention. My child's teacher agrees. Is it too early for my child to be screened for ADHD?



Grades K-4 Attention

1. My child's teacher said that distractibility and inattention are keeping my child from making progress in school. Should I be concerned?
2. I've noticed that my child has a lot of trouble paying attention. Should I ask for an ADHD screening?



Grades 5-8 Attention

1. My child seems not to pay close attention to details and makes careless mistakes in schoolwork and even during activities at home. How can I help my child improve skills in this area?
2. How do I know if my child's inattention is carelessness, a real disorder of attention, or something else?
3. My child seems to have a lot of trouble paying attention. Should I ask for an ADHD screening?



High School Attention

1. Difficulties with attention and organization are holding my child back from getting good grades and completing tasks. Is it possible that my child has ADHD? If so, how can I get my child screened or evaluated?
2. My child is disorganized, has a hard time keeping to a schedule, and needs frequent reminders to get things done. What should I do to help my child be more independent?

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 Educators 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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