

Accommodations for Adults to help with Training

Individuals with Specific Learning Disorders can apply for certain accommodations to assist with completion of their training through work, university, or TAFE. These accommodations are designed to assist trainees to demonstrate their skills and abilities more accurately, in comparison with other people who are completing the same training course.

- Specific Learning Disorders are enduring conditions and result in the significant under-representation of students at tertiary studies level.
- Adults with a SLD who are studying typically spend three to five times longer than those students without a learning disability, when completing set tasks. Accordingly, extra time may be needed to read and process information, especially if it involves a reading or writing activity under timed conditions such as during examinations or completion of assignments within a deadline.

Accommodations need not compromise training standards or work output. Instead, accommodations involve adaptations and modifications of teaching practices. Accommodating adults with a SLD in the training environment should aim to:

- Provide learning through modified and / or different teaching methods and the use of assistive technology and educational materials.
- Provide the opportunity for alternative assessment and examination procedures.

Tips for Educators and Employers When Providing Training

- **Provide clear simplified and concrete instructions.** Check to ensure that your trainees understand the task requirements and encourage them to set reminders during completion of the task.
- **Structure tasks and present them in a step by step manner:** Tasks presented to your trainee should be broken into small steps that are given in order of the easiest to the most difficult step. This sequencing will assist in enhancing your trainee's understanding. Furthermore, it may be helpful for your trainee to complete a step before being given further direction or instruction.
- Large blocks of text are difficult to read, so wherever possible **prepare worksheets** with clear guidance of where to look for the important information. For example, give overviews, summaries and use dot points for emphasis. Larger font (14pt) is helpful.
- **Use a multisensory approach** by incorporating visuals (e.g. diagrams, charts, flashcards, demonstrations, pictures), hands-on materials, and verbal explanations.
- **Practical and concrete activities**, should be included whenever possible. Allowing your trainees to "do" tasks will increase their experience of success and therefore boost motivation. **Demonstration** of what a task requires is also strongly encouraged. This can be achieved through trainer modelling, at a class or individual level, as well as peer modelling. Your trainee may better understand new information when presented visually rather than verbally so allowing observation with a colleague or an instructor prior to attempting a new task will be beneficial.
- Your trainee with a SLD may require extra **instruction/explanation** to ensure understanding of new concepts. Where possible, this instruction should be delivered in a variety of ways, such as written, video, pictorial, music etc. Your trainee may also need extra time, practice and feedback to master some concepts. Use of prompts and scaffolding (e.g. dictionaries, calculators, symbols, flow charts, lists, summary sheets, planning documents) should be encouraged. Provision of summaries including key teaching points will be useful to allow the trainee to supplement their own notes.

- **Instructors should be aware of and cater for any difficulties in the language area.** Many individuals with a SLD will experience gaps in word knowledge and verbal comprehension. Providing a glossary of terms relevant to the specific subject area will be useful. It will also be important to tailor the learning objectives to build on existing skills and knowledge, or modify tasks to suit the individual's needs.
- **Structured frameworks** can help a trainee understand what is required in tasks such as essay writing, projects, or reports. Provide examples of essays and reports that are of a high standard and explain what factors contributed to make them successful.
- **Allow the use of aids and equipment** such as dictionaries, word processors (with spell check programmes), hand held spell checker, scribes and calculators.
- **Offer alternative modes of assessment** to allow trainees with a SLD to demonstrate their skills and knowledge. This may involve allowing the trainee to present information in an oral format, rather than a written assessment. An oral presentation may be particularly useful when literacy is not a specific outcome for the assessment task.
- **Encourage the trainee to seek assistance and clarification** when required. Remember to maintain a positive approach to teaching new tasks and concepts to maintain the trainee's self-esteem and motivation.
- Encourage trainees who are experiencing difficulties to consult with the appropriate Student Services, Learning Support, or Disability Services team at their educational institution.

Tips for Individuals with a SLD to Successfully Complete Training

- Material presented in a range of formats (e.g. diagrams, charts, handouts, audio recordings, videos) may help you to remember important information.
- Experiential learning, such as hands-on activities or computer-assisted learning, will allow you to integrate the information in a meaningful way.
- Ask for help in understanding the goals of each unit of training. Consider asking a colleague to summarise the unit/subject outlines with you to assist your understanding about the content covered, assessment tasks, and key due dates.
- Use a small audio tape recorder to record instructions, classes, or lectures so that you can listen to key points again at a later date.
- Ensure tasks have been made clear. If you're uncertain about any aspect of your training, ask the instructor or a colleague for clarification. You will find that other people like to be asked for advice, and it lets them see that you're eager to complete your training properly.
- If possible, select texts that are available electronically. Ask a librarian what texts are available in audio format within your field of study.
- You may find it useful to repeat and revise key skills until they are over-learned. This can be done through ensuring key statements/concepts/instructions are highlighted and repeated in some way that assist you to retain the required information.
- Use a glossary of definitions including words specific to your area of learning.
- Use coloured highlighters to emphasise key words or information in text.

A number of these strategies were accessed through the Opening All Options website:
http://services.admin.utas.edu.au/options/teaching_strategies.htm