



Classroom/Teacher Supports for Students with DLD

(and ALL students, but students with DLD *depend* upon these strategies to succeed)

To Support **Listening (“taking In”)** what is spoken/read:

1. Chunk Instructions

- Break tasks into **one-step directions**.
- Give time to process each step before moving on (e.g., instead of saying “Open your book and turn to page 47, then answer questions 1 to 3,” say, “First, open your book. [Wait.] Now turn to page 47. [Wait.] Now read question 1.”

2. Use FAR MORE Visuals WAY MORE OFTEN

- Draw, use your body language/facial expressions, and show Google images – clip art, real photos, etc.
- Draw a **quick sketch while talking** (e.g., for a novel, make stick figures for each character; make diagrams)
- Draw their attention to the visual schedule often, and **add details/steps to it** (*while they are looking*)

3. Make a Task List to Check Off

- Provide key words or a list of tasks on the board or on their desk.
- Highlight or check off as tasks are completed.
- Visuals and/or charts for tasks can help reduce cognitive load.

4. PAUSE often and provide Non-Verbal Cues

- Let them know it's okay to take their time by PAUSING to think – normalize PAUSING in the classroom
- Give them a non-verbal cue (e.g., touching your chin) to make “I’m thinking” an daily classroom routine
- Normalize processing pauses in the classroom (e.g., “We all need a moment to think!”)

5. WAIT! Stop and Pay Attention

- Resist talking/giving instructions when they doing a task or clearly not “taking in” what you are saying.
- Resist talking/giving instructions when they are in the middle of the first instruction you gave them.
- With enthusiasm, say: “I’m going to tell you something important” and “Let me know when you are ready!”

6. Pre-Teach/Preview and REVIEW

- Tell them what you will be doing before, during, and after the lesson.
- Introduce new vocabulary or concepts **before** the lesson.
- Let them hear, see, and rehearse the ideas *without the pressure of answering questions right away*.
- Take 5 minutes at the end of each lesson to review and **ASK THEM TO REPEAT WHAT THEY KNOW/WHAT THEY JUST LEARNED** (this is extremely effective to solidify learning, but note that this is more of a “speaking/expression” task than a listening task).

7. Use Specific Words rather than “this, that, thing, it”

- Rather than, “Put this into that thing over there”, say “Put your painting on the art shelf at the back of the classroom.”

8. Offer Quiet Processing Spaces—places to go if/when overwhelmed by language load.

To Support **Speaking/Writing** (saying what they know):

1. Give Multiple Choice Questions

- Reduce the burden of generating language from scratch (e.g., instead of asking, "Why did the character leave?" say: "Did the character leave because he was scared, or because he was angry?"

2. Draw and Use Graphic Organizers

- Encourage sketching, mind maps, or visual sequencing to organize written ideas before speaking/writing.

3. Think, Pair, Share with Peers

- Allow them to rehearse their answers with a peer (e.g., "**Think for a minute, Pair up with a peer, Share**") before sharing with the class. Sometimes they just need a bit of time to "prep" their thoughts.
- Use peer buddies for shared tasks (when possible)

4. Allow them to Represent what they know in Different Ways

- Be flexible with assessment formats when possible (oral, drawing, matching, **MULTIPLE CHOICE!!**)

5. Validate their struggles to Listen

- Let them know that it is okay if they cannot answer quickly
- Let them know that it is okay if they struggle to follow directions
- Let them know that it is okay to ask you to repeat directions/questions
- Let them know that their struggles have **NOTHING TO DO** with what they actually know, or how hard they are trying – **consistently praise their HARD WORK and EFFORT!**

6. Use their Strengths—Intentionally

- If a student is a great **storyteller**, give dedicated time for them to tell stories (e.g., as a classroom job, in morning meetings, or during "story breaks"). Teach them when storytelling is helpful vs. when to use other strategies. They could also tell stories through puppetry, drama, or other artistic representations.
- If a student is good at **visual/spatial reasoning** (remembering visual information), have them re-design the classroom layout, build models physically (habitats/settings), draw diagrams/images/cartoons or infographics *that everyone could use*.
- If a student is good at **nonverbal problem solving** (figuring things out without relying on words), have them fix things that are broken (like a pencil sharpener), or come up with ways to solve classroom problems, do coding/robotics using visual programming, hands-on ways to demonstrate their learning.
- If a student has a strength in **empathy and social insight** (high emotional intelligence and ability to tune into others' moods), have them observe or help in group work roles, give them a peer mentorship role (e.g., reading buddy), give them writing tasks that involve writing from the perspective of a character.

Addressing "blurting out the first thing that comes to mind/random answers":

- **This is a self-soothing or processing aid.**
- **Acknowledge the impulse:** "It's okay to need time to think. You don't have to answer right away."
- **Use a private signal:** Create a cue (like tapping your chin) to remind them to think before responding.
- **Model:** Show *your own thinking process* out loud: "Hmm... let me think about that... oh! I know!"
- **Point out when they succeed!!** (when they remember to pause and get the answer in their minds first)
- **Reassure them that they have time:** "I'm going to give you a direction, and then I'll wait while you think about it. I don't expect an answer right away. Just take a moment, and when you're ready, let me know."
- **Use meta-cognition strategies** –let them know what you notice and see if they notice the same thing – then reassure them that it is okay to pause, and think quietly before answering, and that this is okay.

Want to learn more about DLD?



<https://www.dldandme.org/#what-is-dld>



<https://radld.org/>



<https://thedldproject.com/>