

A teacher's guide to DLD

I've never heard of DLD. What is it?

DLD stands for Developmental Language Disorder. It is where people have difficulties understanding or using their native language. It is not rare and is thought to affect approximately 2 children in every class of 30.

Is DLD the label given to anyone with language difficulties?

No.

People with a genetic condition associated with language difficulties, such as Down Syndrome, or a history of hearing loss or a diagnosis of Autism, are not considered to have DLD.

Does DLD only affect children?

No.

While language skills improve over the years, people with DLD will have persistent difficulties using language throughout their life. So DLD also affects adults. Some people are not diagnosed until adulthood.



2 in 30 children meet diagnostic criteria for DLD



Does it only affect literacy?

DLD affects more skills than just literacy. Research has shown that many children with DLD struggle with concepts used in maths.

To solve a maths problem, you need to first understand what the maths question is asking you to do. And to do this, you need to be able to accurately interpret the word order, which is something children with DLD struggle with. Language difficulties also seem to make it harder for people to use calculations and do the problem solving required to complete maths problems.

Children with DLD may need additional support to access the maths curriculum.

What else should I be looking out for?

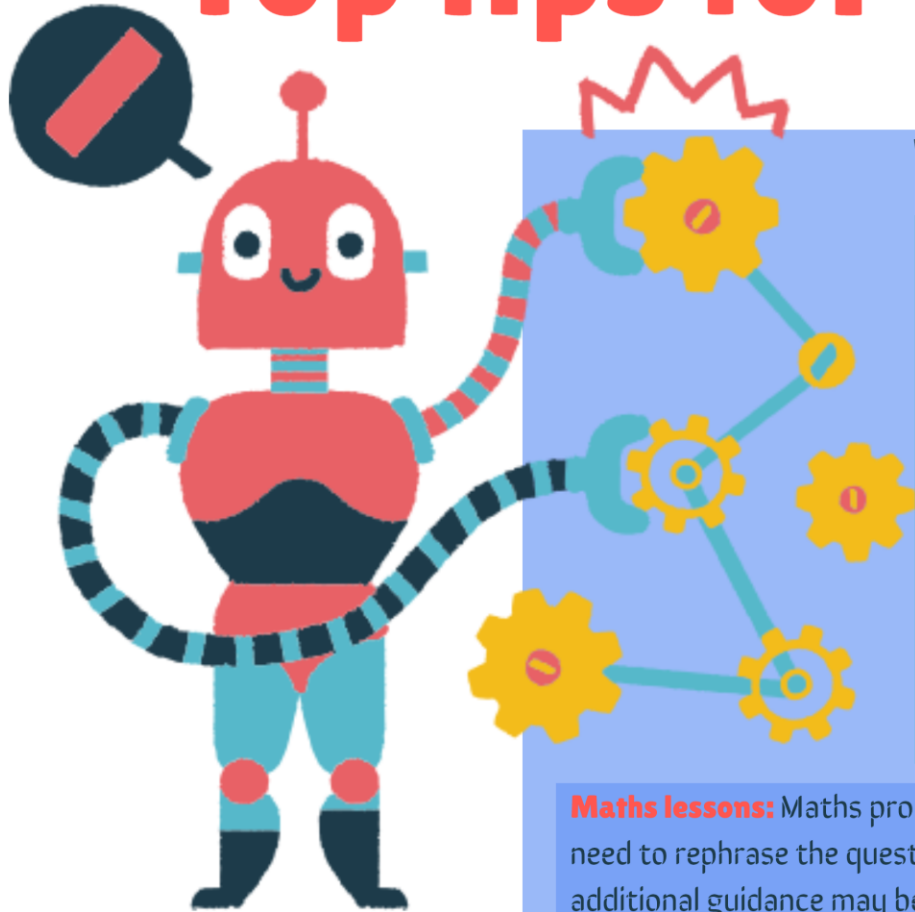
Young people with DLD often find it difficult to follow instructions. If you find a child isn't doing what you've asked of them, ask yourself, "Have they understood what I've said?"



Language processing is difficult. It is useful to allow plenty of time and opportunities for children to learn new vocabulary. Also, children may find it hard to understand and resolve problems with peers on their own.

Young people with DLD can be very withdrawn. In the classroom they may be reluctant to put themselves forward. In the playground, they may find it hard to join in with their peers. A child with DLD will likely need extra encouragement to join in with activities.

Top tips for teachers



What can teachers do to support children with DLD?

- > **Use plenty of visuals!** Are there images you can use to describe your point? Images are likely to convey your message more effectively than words.
- > **Explain things in different ways!** If a child doesn't seem to be following your instructions, they may not have understood them. Explain the lesson objective in more than one way.
- > **Use short sentences!** Long sentences with multiple instructions are hard to understand. Break your sentences down into smaller parts.
- > **Use sentence stems!** Support children in forming answers by giving stems they can build on. E.g. "I agree that...because" or "I think the answer is...because". This can help students feel more confident.

Maths lessons: Maths problems often use language processing. You may need to rephrase the question in different ways before it is understood. Also, additional guidance may be necessary for children to learn effective strategies to solve maths problems.

Science lessons: Provide students with new science terminology before the lesson. Return to it multiple times. It may not be learnt and retained the first time around! In fact, this need not be limited to science. This is also useful for other lessons including Maths, History and Geography.

Beyond the classroom: what about social skills?

- > Raise awareness of the importance of language and language disorders through the whole school! Help children to recognise the challenges some of their peers have using language. This could help children to be able to support each other in their social worlds.

