

How Down syndrome can influence learning

CHALLENGES

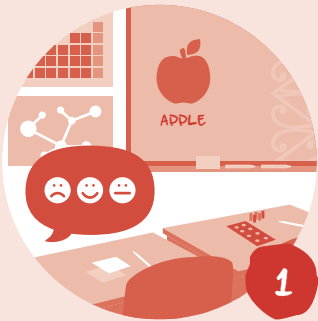
Will vary from student to student

- ▶ Learning new skills at the same pace as their peers.
- ▶ Maintaining concentration and understanding complex spoken instructions.
- ▶ Communicating using spoken language.
- ▶ Processing information and understanding complex verbal instructions.
- ▶ Developing functional use of literacy and numeracy.
- ▶ Acquiring new physical skills.

STRENGTHS

Will vary from student to student

- ▶ Strong empathy with others.
- ▶ Good short-term memory.
- ▶ Social understanding and non-verbal communication.
- ▶ Visual learning skills.



Present curriculum content in different ways

- ▶ Use plenty of visual, concrete and practical materials.
- ▶ Provide repetition and opportunities to rehearse and practice new skills and learning.
- ▶ Use strategies such as prompting, cueing or giving forced alternatives to develop students' knowledge of social language, for example, by asking, 'Was your friend happy or sad when you did that?'
- ▶ Consider teaching new words by pairing the spoken word with a picture and/or sign of the word.
- ▶ Use visual supports to scaffold language skills.
- ▶ Write key words on the whiteboard that students can refer to.
- ▶ Consider games or drama and role-play to practice speech, language and vocabulary.
- ▶ For numbers and maths, let students physically touch and handle three dimensional shapes and objects (investigate Numicon, developed especially for students with Down syndrome).
- ▶ Provide plenty of opportunities to practice balance, strength, co-ordination, climbing and running.



Adjust the classroom environment

- ▶ Reduce background noise and movement that can cause distraction.
- ▶ Use visual organisers or planners that identify what is happening when and what will be achieved throughout the day or class.
- ▶ Watch for tiredness – put a plan in place to manage fatigue, such as quiet spaces in the classroom.



Use technology and equipment

- ▶ Encourage the use of graphic organisers and tools such as mind maps.
- ▶ Use a digital timer set to vibrate at particular intervals to remind students to complete a task, or transition to another activity.
- ▶ Enable students to use speech sound and language software.



Stimulate interest and motivation

- ▶ Support concentration, attention and organisation
 - ▶ Use lots of praise and motivational strategies.
 - ▶ Break down complex tasks and instructions into smaller chunks, one instruction at a time, using pictures, words and short phrases.
 - ▶ Allocate additional time to complete tasks.
- ▶ Help consolidate learning through repetition and linking to life experience.
 - ▶ Scaffold tasks for students who do not do this for themselves for example, beginning, middle and end framework.
 - ▶ Provide a range of options for students to understand and express what they know. Students may prefer to use body language, signing, digital tools and visual aids such as a photoboard, digital presentation, visual schedules or a poster to communicate.
 - ▶ Encourage students to make handy reference aids that feature common subject facts that they can refer back to throughout the school day.