

*When the ear
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Did You Hear What I Said?

It's important to consider how frustrated a child feels who has an auditory processing difficulty. Your patience and support are essential to help build the child's self-esteem. Proper instruction and appropriate strategies are the keys to the child's success at home, in school, and in the community.

Joey can't remember what his homework is, although he says he understood it when his teacher gave the assignment to the class. He also has difficulty retaining information when his mother helps him study for a test.

In the evening, Joey's mother will instruct him to do chores. She often hears Joey calling to his sister before he sets the table because he has trouble remembering information. Everyone is exasperated with him and Joey is frustrated with himself because he knows he is doing his best.

Auditory processing problem (APD)

When the ear and the brain are not working together and there is a breakdown in understanding spoken language, the student with normal hearing may have APD. The brain fails to receive, remember, and understand information. Most students with this difficulty have normal intelligence. APD or poor ear memory is accompanied by a slower rate of learning.

A student with APD will take longer to do school work. When this happens, teachers and classmates may feel frustrated and become impatient with the student because the learning problem is hidden. Others may have difficulty understanding that the student's behavior is not intentional.

Meeting a child's needs

With the right environment and appropriate instruction, most students can learn to compensate for their auditory processing disorder. Are there strategies teachers can use to help these students become more effective learners?

Auditory attention problem

A student lacks the ability to listen long enough in order to complete a task and understand what is being said, such as in a class discussion or lecture.

Auditory discrimination problem

A student may not hear the difference between "quilt" and "kilt." That student may have difficulty with spelling, writing, reading, word identification, and comprehension.



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Auditory figure-ground problem

Background noise in the classroom creates a difficult environment for the student to pay attention and to sort out relevant from irrelevant information. Background noise makes it difficult for the student to understand spoken language.

Auditory integration problem

A student has difficulty understanding idiomatic expressions, abstract concepts, words that have more than one meaning, and reaching opinions through conversation.

Auditory memory problem

A student would have difficulty remembering important information that would affect their ability to follow directions, to participate in class discussions, and to study.

Consider where the student sits. Place the student away from distractions or noise and where they are able to see the teacher clearly. It's important for the student to have a full view of the speaker's face. The classroom setting should not be distracting. Teachers need to find ways to reduce auditory distractions. Consulting with an audiologist, teachers can determine whether the use of an acoustic device that transmits their voice directly to the student may help.

It's best to use a multi-sensory approach when teaching students with auditory difficulties. Using visual and tactile (tracing and touching) cues helps the student grasp what they hear. A multi-sensory approach can be used in helping students learn to:

- Blend sounds and syllables automatically and to blend ideas for comprehension.
- Understand the big picture so that they have a place to "stick" the details.
- Break down sounds in words and ideas in text.
- Read words accurately and automatically.

- Learn vocabulary and help with understanding ideas.

Together teachers and parents can use a variety of tools to help children with APD succeed at home and at school.

For example:

- Check to make sure the student understands what you are saying
- Repeat information.
- Speak clearly and at a moderate rate.
- Be patient and allow the student to take more time than normal to respond.
- Simplify complicated directions by breaking them down step by step.
- Use picture and examples to introduce a new idea orally.
- Make a bridge to past experiences and prior knowledge.
- Work with the student in deciding what strategies to use at school and at home.
- Work with other specialists, such as a speech-language pathologist, as needed.

Other strategies to help these students learn include visualization, note taking, and self-advocacy skills. Understanding how frustrated the child with ADP must feel, it's important to be patient and supportive and to build the child's self-esteem. The condition is not in the child's control. Proper instruction and appropriate strategies are the keys to the child's success at home, in school, and in the community.

Resources

[American Speech, Language, Hearing Association \(ASHA\)](#)

Understanding auditory processing disorders in children.

800-498-2071

[National Center for Learning Disabilities](#)

Information on auditory processing disorders.

212-545-7510