

ABOUT PHYSICAL DISABILITIES



The term physical disabilities doesn't only refer to those in wheelchairs. Typically, people with physical disabilities have something about their body that works differently.

Each learner with physical disabilities is a unique individual and adjustments to their educational program and learning environment should be tailored to their needs. When you understand the impact of physical disabilities on the individual learner, you'll be better able to adjust to their needs.



**Government
of South Australia**

Department for Education

Types of physical disabilities

- Cerebral palsy
- Spina bifida
- Muscular dystrophy
- Amputation
- Spinal cord injury or brain injury
- Cystic fibrosis
- Epilepsy
- Multiple sclerosis

Common requirements for physical disabilities

The common requirements that learners with physical disabilities have for accessing a learning environment are:

- time to familiarise themselves with the environment for access and safety
- handrails when there are 1 to 3 stairs
- no tripping hazards in the learning space or walkways
- management of fatigue caused by walking, handwriting, typing and transfers in or out of a wheelchair
- minimal walking distance between learning spaces and to the toilets
- appropriate access to accessible toilets and bathrooms
- time allowed for personal care management
- modesty and dignity during personal care management
- space in rooms for equipment which may include wheelchairs, specialised chairs, lifters or slings, standing frames or adjustable change beds
- checks of posture supports like head supports, lap belts, side laterals, pommels, ankle foot orthotics (AFO) and arm splints
- access to assistive software (speech-to-text, voice recognition, immersive reader) and hardware (laptop, modified keyboard and mouse)
- technology like an individualised augmentative or alternative communication system to communicate.

Strengths of learners with physical disabilities

The strengths of learners with physical disabilities can be:

- organisation
- creativity and inventiveness
- perseverance at a task with a determination to succeed
- self-awareness of their personal learning strategies.

PHYSICAL DISABILITIES ADJUSTMENTS



EXAMPLES OF ADJUSTMENTS



Planning for access to your site

The department supports universal design for all learners. Planning for how a learner will access their learning environments will need to happen before the learner starts attending your site. This might involve locating and planning to use existing facilities or planning new facilities through your site or Disability Access Provisions (DAP). The things you will need to consider are:

- the outdoor environment – paths, play areas, garden or lawn areas, sleepers or logs, inclines or declines, shelter
- buildings – ramps, steps and handrails, turning space for mobility equipment, door widths and locker heights
- personal care management – accessible bathroom facilities with the appropriate equipment, room to manoeuvre and store equipment, power points for equipment
- learning spaces – desks or other equipment, height of equipment, spaces clear of tripping hazards, storage for equipment, sink if required.



Identify daily scheduling requirements

It is important that all elements that will make up the learner's day are considered and planned for. This includes:

- therapy appointments, either in the learning space or when the learner leaves for appointments
- personal care management tasks that occur throughout the day
- extra time required for movement around the site or for movement-based activities within their learning
- learner fatigue from physical or cognitive demands.



Teaching and learning adjustments

- Provide work in a variety of modes, guided by the recommendations for that individual learner.
- Provide options for learners to respond through different modes.
- Make sure examples of learners with physical disabilities are included in the teaching and learning material you provide to all learners.
- Provide routines and repetition to improve cognitive memory and empower learners to become more independent. For example, explicitly teaching and repeating the steps for accessing a vocabulary list or navigating common tasks in their communication system.
- Enlarge print or ensure learners can enlarge print to suit their requirements.
- Use concrete materials and visual supports.
- Provide modified science equipment such as plastic instead of glass and handles on beakers.
- Encourage the group to create ideas for inclusion in the PE program.