

ABOUT GLOBAL DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY (GDD)



Global developmental delay (GDD) is when a learner has significant delays in 2 or more developmental domains (for example gross or fine motor skills, speech and language, social and personal skills). Sometimes the terms 'developmental delay' and 'global developmental delay' are used interchangeably.

GDD is a diagnosis that psychologists or paediatricians can make for children who display significant impairments in both cognitive abilities (eg ability to think, learn and problem solve), gross and fine motor skills, and skills of everyday living (eg dressing, toileting, eating, communicating and socialising independently). Diagnosis is guided by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders, 5th edn (DSM-5-TR).

The impact of GDD on learning

Learners with global developmental delay may have difficulty with:

- executive function (planning, impulse control, emotional control, working memory)
- communication and social skills
- following multi-part instructions
- gross motor and fine motor planning.

GDD and associated diagnoses

Learners with GDD may have associated diagnoses that can also contribute to their overall delay in development, for example:

- neurodivergent diagnoses like autism and ADHD
- cerebral palsy
- Down syndrome
- fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD)
- fragile X syndrome
- hearing loss
- intellectual disability
- language and speech disorders.

Potential strengths and interests of learners with GDD

Potential preferences and strengths of learners with global developmental delay may include:

- imaginative play
- interest in what their peers are doing and the desire to be friends
- positive responses to music
- positive responses to structure and routine
- benefiting from visual prompts.



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GDD ADJUSTMENTS



EXAMPLES OF ADJUSTMENTS



General teaching

- Recognise and use the learner's strengths and interests to create opportunities for success.
- Encourage learners to attempt and persist at learning tasks that are challenging for them.
- Provide a safe and supportive learning environment.
- Be consistent and predictable through introducing and maintaining routines and expectations.
- Repeat, repeat, repeat. Provide learners with opportunities to return to their learning and play experiences numerous times so that the learning and development can be retained and then transferred to other areas of learning.



Play

Play skills may present as delayed. You can support the development of play by:

- modelling and showing the learner new and different things to do with a toy
- following the learner's lead and copying what they do with a toy
- creating opportunities for the learner to engage with other children in structured and unstructured play
- encouraging sensory play with clay, play dough or shaving cream. These are opportunities to develop finger and hand strength and coordination.



Environmental adjustments

- Reduce room distractions.
- Keep an uncluttered learning environment.
- Clearly mark boundaries with expectations of behaviour.
- Use specialised seating or adaptive materials and furniture to support learners' physical and sensory needs.



Learning instruction

- Give short and specific instructions.
- Slow down your speech to allow more processing time.
- Use visual cues to support message delivery such as actions and visual cues on learning materials and personal items.
- Be specific when offering praise, encouragement and feedback about a task.
- Offer the learner choices so they are encouraged to use words and to have more agency in their learning.