

# ABOUT INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY (ID)



Intellectual disability (ID) is a life-long condition that can impact a person's ability to learn and retain new information.

See the online practice guides for full references and to find out more:

[edi.sa.edu.au/practiceguidance](https://edi.sa.edu.au/practiceguidance)



**Government  
of South Australia**

Department for Education

## Diagnosis of intellectual disability

For a learner to be diagnosed with ID they must have impairments in intellectual functioning assessed by a psychologist, through an IQ test. Where an IQ test cannot be conducted an assessment is done through observation, which is then scored by a psychologist using an Adaptive Behaviour Assessment System (ABAS) or similar.

Learners will also display impairments to adaptive behaviour, this refers to their ability to apply social and practical skills in everyday life.

## Difference between global development delay and intellectual disability

Some learners may start school or preschool with the diagnosis of Global Developmental Delay (GDD). Not all of these learners will move on to receive a diagnosis of Intellectual Disability as they may develop skills in early intervention or receive a different diagnosis.

## Impact of intellectual disability on learning

Learners with ID may have difficulty in these areas:

- conceptual
  - understanding abstract concepts
  - the sequential processing of information
- social
  - communication and social skills
- practical
  - responding when they haven't had adequate processing time
  - following multiple step instructions
  - understanding, recalling and applying new learning.

Learners with ID can often use behaviour to communicate. This behaviour could include:

- avoidance
- absconding
- nonattendance
- distracting behaviour
- refusal
- emotional or physical responses.

Consider the underlying reasons for these behaviours and how to meet those difficulties or frustrations in a positive manner. Teachers should ensure that the educational adjustments are targeted to provide the appropriate level of support, when considering a learner's behaviour.

# INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY (ID) ADJUSTMENTS



## EXAMPLES OF ADJUSTMENTS

No two learners ID are the same. Their experiences will vary depending on their education, cultural and family influences. Therefore, no single approach will meet the needs of all learners.



### Increase engagement

- Linking the curriculum to learners' interests can further support their engagement.
- Learners with ID may have interests that are different to their same aged peers.
- Draw on learner interests to engage and maintain motivation.



### Processing time

- Allowing time for processing can support learners to understand instructions, learning tasks, or a new concept.
- Provide learners with 5 to 15 seconds to respond, or 20 to 60 seconds for more complex instructions or questions.
- You can count this silently to yourself to make sure the learner gets the full amount of time.
- Maintain a quiet patient, demeanour and avoid interrupting the processing time with additional verbal input as this can be confusing.



### Multiple exposures

- When learners practice what they have learnt over time through multiple, spaced-out interactions, it encourages the development of deeper understandings and supports the retention and transference of learning.
- Use different activities to change the way learners engage with and build on new knowledge and skills.
- Regularly go back over any new learning to check for retention.



### Support of emotional regulation

- Label emotions, for example 'I'm noticing ... you might be feeling worried, I can see ... I think you're excited.'
- When the learner is calm, sit with them and talk about how it can feel when they start to become dysregulated, so they are more self-aware of the early warning signs.
- Develop a plan for them to intervene early and calm themselves using favourite activities or a safe regulation space.