

Supporting students' understanding of written instructions

Written resources containing instructions for students to undertake and complete their own work often contain multi-part instructions and complex terminology. They may pose major challenges to students with LDs, who struggle to 'unpack' the information, work out what they are expected to produce, and ultimately undertake independent work. This may lead to negative situations such as the misinterpretation of the instructions, incomplete work or in some cases, complete avoidance.

ISSUE	MODIFICATION TECHNIQUES	EXAMPLES
<p>Purpose and method of the assignment is unclear. (Student: 'I don't know what to do')</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the instructions and purpose of the project are explained in direct, accessible language. • Include the key information, such as the issue to be written about, early in the text. Students with LDs may miss this information if it is too 'buried' in the text. • Talk through the instruction sheet with the class, and ensure that all students understand all parts of the instructions. Be prepared to clarify important sections for students with LDs, remembering that these students are often not good at asking for help. • Include the subject's topic title as a heading. • Highlight/bold/underline the issue to be addressed in relation to the heading, so that students know exactly what it is they are being asked to write about. • Use the following headings, and include relevant information under each heading: Topic, Issue, Instructions. Use visual icons for reference. • Include meanings for potentially difficult-to-understand instructional vocabulary. 	<p>See Appendix page 127, Understanding questions and instructions.</p> <p>Example: 'Printed books as we know them will disappear in the 21st century. Write a couple of points both for and against this statement'</p> <p>Topic: Books</p> <p>Issue: Will printed books disappear by the end of this century?</p> <p>Instructions: Write two points for AND two points against this statement.</p> <p>NB. A graphic timeline of the 21st century could be a useful vocabulary learning moment, where we are on the timeline and how many more years to go before the end of the century. Students with LD have great difficulty grasping the idea of time without visual aids.</p>