



Helping Students with Brain Injury

Communication deficits involve problems with both receptive and expressive language skills. Reducing the amount of information given, altering the complexity of information, and slowing the rate of presentation helps a student overcome these weaknesses. Expressive language difficulties are often demonstrated in weak organization of thought, difficulty staying on topic, and finding the right word to use on command. Written language reflects all these deficits and is often weaker than pre-injury levels.

The following are sample strategies you can use. It is important to remember that all brain injuries are unique and that all students have different strengths and weaknesses, therefore different strategies may or may not work depending on the student, the class, and the time of day, among other factors. It is important to remain flexible in trying different strategies until you find one that works for that student, and to always keep in mind the ultimate goal of moving students towards independence. Once you have found a strategy that works use it consistently and share it with others who work with that student.

Difficulty with...	Strategy/Accommodation	Example
Word finding (aphasia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Provide alternative testing: matching, multiple choice, etc. that depend on recognition and not retrieval ➤ Provide word banks 	<p>Dave cannot identify the Presidents of the United States on a test.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Dave is provided a multiple choice test on the history of the Presidency. ➤ Dave is allowed a word bank for fill-in questions.
Comprehending class discussion and/or readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Audio system that focuses on just the teacher's voice ➤ Limit the amount of information and use concrete language ➤ Provide visual information to supplement class teaching/discussion ➤ Providing an outline in advance of lectures 	<p>Bill cannot understand the teacher's assignment. When asked to report on the middle ages submits a report on middle aged women.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Bill's teacher wears a microphone that transmits just what the teacher is saying to Bill ➤ Bill's teacher modifies the lesson on history of the President's so as to not include memorization of the President's names, but include comprehension of the role of the President. ➤ Bill has an outline of the chapter to follow along before and after reading the chapter which highlights key points. ➤ Bill is given teacher's notes to make comprehension easier.

Communication & Auditory Issues

- Use visuals (projected class notes or presentation) to reinforce/support lecture
- Desk copy of projected (overhead, powerpoint, proxima, etc.) notes
- Asking the student to repeat or paraphrase what was said in order to clarify that they understood what was said
- Student can listen to taped lectures at own pace, with text at the same time as an option
- Teacher sensitivity to student's confusion
- Clarify by repeating, rephrasing, requesting questions, etc.

- Bill's teacher writes on the board more so that he can see what is being talked about.
- Bill gets copies of all materials teacher uses prior to lecture.
- Bill's teacher asks him to summarize the main points of the lesson.
- Bill's teacher allows him to audio record classes; with a focus on chapter summary classes
- Bill's teacher recognizes when Bill is becoming overwhelmed by the information and slows down
- Bill's teacher rewords what she is saying to increase the chance of understanding.

Organizing thoughts resulting in a choppy presentation with important details omitted

Lisa's oral report leaves out important details and doesn't make sense.

- Assisting with an outline for presentations

- Lisa's teacher works with her to develop the outline and timeline for her oral report.

Pragmatics – turn taking, reading body language, give and take during conversations

Nancy has difficulty having conversations with people because she keeps talking out of turn.

- Utilize social skill groups or a circle of friends (with non-disabled peers) to teach social skills

- Nancy attends a social skills group and her school social worker develops a circle of friends for her for recess.

Difficulty processing information if it is presented quickly and/or with auditory distractions

Sue is unable to follow what the teacher is saying because of the noise from the hallway.

- Allow testing in a quiet place
- Audio system that focuses on just the teacher's voice
- Seat student away from distractions

- Dave takes his tests in a separate room.
- Sue's teacher wears a microphone that transmits just what the teacher is saying.
- Sue is seated away from the classroom door and closer to the teacher's desk.

Keeping up with the flow

Bob is still trying to grasp the concepts discussed during the

of information discussed, especially as information becomes more complex.

first 15 minutes of class while the teacher and class have moved on to a different topic.

- Scaffold learning-provide the opportunity to preview at home or school
 - Allow extra time to process information, as well as retrieve and generate information
 - Teacher prepared notes, pre-reading and study guides in advance of a lecture or discussion
 - Summarize at the end of a topic
 - Chunk information together
- Carl's teacher sends home outlines the day before the topic is discussed for student to review.
 - Mary's schedule provides study hours after more difficult classes to write an outline of what was reviewed, prepare for homework, further reading, etc.
 - Mary's teacher gives her an outline to follow during class.
 - Mary's teacher goes over the main points of the topic before moving on to the next.
 - Mary's teacher chunks sections of the history lesson together.

Adapting the strategies for the IEP

The IEP focuses on academic and/or functional areas affected in the school setting, with the goal of establishing measurable academic and/or functional goals. These goals include benchmark or short-term objectives, as well as criteria for measuring and evaluating the objective. It also includes modifications and supplementary aids, including assistive technology devices and services. As there have been numerous advancements in technology in recent years an assistive technology evaluation should be a consideration for all areas of impairment, including physical and cognitive impairments. *It is important to keep in mind that the IEP should be a fluid document, re-assessed regularly and able to be modified if strategies being utilized are not having the desired effect.*

Example:

Academic and/or Functional Area: Communication and Auditory

Annual Measurable Academic and/or Functional Goal: Summarize the main points of the lesson without cueing with 80% accuracy by June 30.

Benchmark or Short-Term Objectives: Summarize the main points of the lesson with 60% accuracy by November 30. Begin phasing cueing out by providing 2 cues, then 1 cue, then eventually no cueing.

Criteria: Teacher and teacher aide assessment.

Evaluation: 3 out of 5 written summaries indicate 80% accuracy.

Modification/Supplementary Aid: Live Scribe Pen.

Academic and/or Functional Area: _____

Annual Measurable Academic and/or Functional Goal: _____

Benchmark or Short-Term Objectives: _____

Criteria: _____

Evaluation: _____

Modification/Supplementary Aid: _____