

ADJUSTMENTS FOR THE INDIVIDUAL TO CONSIDER

READING

When reading, use a ruler under the line you are reading to help you follow the text.

Some people find coloured overlays (or acetates) placed over the text stops the words from 'jumping' across the page.

Text photocopied onto different coloured paper may have the same effect as using the coloured overlays. Try out a variety of colours to see which one suits you best.

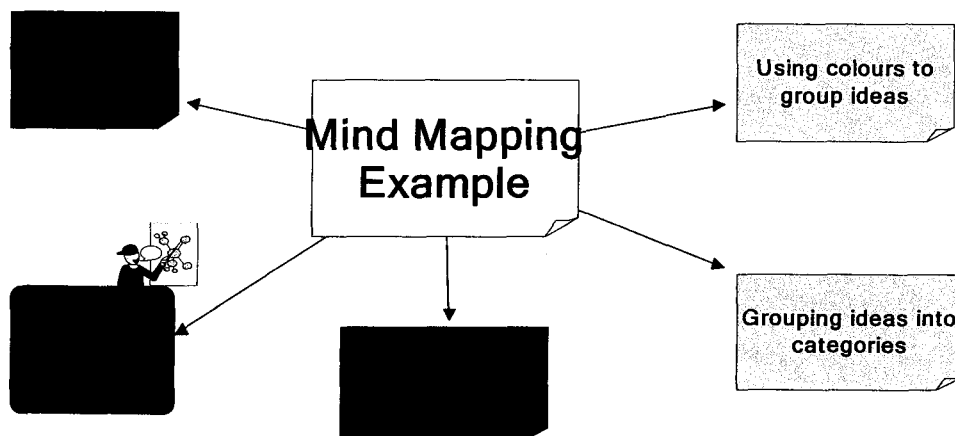
The background colour on the computer can also be changed to your preferred colour, or changed to buff colour as this is less glary then white.

When reading documents, use a highlighter pen to pick out key words or phrases

Keep a list of regularly used words which are pertinent to your workplace. These words can then be put into "auto text" for regularly used words on the computer.

Programs that will read back text on the computer are available. A free program can be downloaded from www.readplease.com.

When taking notes, try to write down key words or phrases in 'mindmaps'. Also use pictures or different colours to highlight relevant sections. An example is shown below:



ORGANISATION AND COORDINATION

Use a 'to do' list to plan and organise tasks and activities

Use other methods of recording information, such as a Dictaphone for large amounts of information or a recordable pen or key ring for about 10-15 seconds of recording time.

Divide your work into short *chunks* with reasonable breaks to allow yourself to see there is an end point and achievement has been gained

Use a timer, an alarm on your watch, or your mobile phone so you can set yourself tasks within a time limit – be realistic about the length of time a task will take and add on a little extra.

Try to learn a new skill slowly and then gradually build up speed to automate it - get someone to show you as well as tell you how to do the task. Talk yourself through the task - verbalising what you are doing can help you remember the parts of a task. Keep a checklist with you if you are unsure of the steps to begin with.

You may find complicated tasks easier if you are sitting down or if you can lean up against a bench or table to give you stability.

When sitting at a desk make sure your feet can rest flat on the floor and the table is just below elbow height when it is bent to 90 degrees. This will provide you with a stable base from which to work.

If using a computer, a speech to text program may be useful such as Dragon Dictate 8

For portability-A palm pilot or pocket PC can be used for taking down information as you move around and can then be "uploaded" onto a computer. External keyboards can also be linked to these palm computers for ease of entering in information.

ATTENTION, CONCENTRATION AND IMPULSIVITY

If you prefer to work in a quiet setting, try finding a suitable place or wearing headphones. If you prefer background noise, headphones with music may be an option.

Use a checklist or a 'to-do' list to structure your time. Set realistic time limits for each item. You can then use an alarm or set your watch to sound when your allocated time is up.

If making lists, make sure you stick to them and check off the items as you complete them, and not just end up writing lists! Also be realistic about the length of the list.

Organise your work into:

- DO IT (what you must do immediately)
- DELAY IT (what you can do later, but this may/will become a 'DO IT' tomorrow!)
- BIN IT!

If working for long periods, get up and move around at regular intervals to help you concentrate

Find a way of relaxing after work, e.g. go for a swim. Yoga, martial arts, listen to music etc.

SOCIAL AND COMMUNICATION

If someone offers to shake your hand, use a firm grip, shake once, look at the person directly, then let your hand go. Practise this with someone you know well.

When someone tells a joke - don't laugh for longer than 3 seconds - anything longer may sound odd to others.

In a group - make sure that your voice is never the loudest - listen for others.

Practise jokes with someone you know well - what may be funny to you may not be funny to someone else.

Do not touch the person you are talking to.

When sitting next to someone (unless it is fixed seating) - be half an arm's length away - you can measure this by clasping your hands in your lap and putting your elbows out.

When facing someone who is standing - be at one arm's length distance - you can check this by putting your arm out to start with until you are used to this distance.

Do not make comments about someone's appearance.

Find out in advance what clothes you should wear to a social occasion (i.e. jeans or a suit/formal dress?)

At a dinner with a buffet- wait till others on the table are getting up to get food and then follow. Don't overfill your plate e.g. only put food in the centre circle of the plate and not fill it to the edges.

Do not drink more than 3 alcoholic drinks during the evening and none at all if you are driving- if you have difficulties in a social context, alcohol will make it even harder for you to concentrate.

Do not smoke at a social gathering unless others are doing so, also ask if anyone minds if you do smoke- if they say "yes"- then do not smoke at this time.

FINAL COMMENTS.....

With appropriate support, individuals with specific learning difficulties can make a valuable and considerable contribution to their employer.

Do not try to change everything all at once. Pick a few ideas to work on at a time and give the strategies time to become routine.

Many people still misunderstand Specific Learning Difficulties, and individuals may be perceived as lazy, poorly motivated, disorganised and confused. The variability of the conditions also adds to the frustration of the individual and others, as one day they appear to be able to do something and yet on another day they cannot. There is no cure for Specific Learning Difficulties. Most individuals learn to live with and manage their condition, although this is sometimes not in a manner that would be expected from the mainstream population. By implementing strategies and techniques, adults with Specific Learning Difficulties can function adequately and contribute to the success of any organisation.