

Auditory Processing Disorder - How Schools Can Help

- Always ensure that the learner with APD is looking at you when you speak to them this allows them to lip-read more easily.
- Speak clearly and ensure they have understood what you have said, not just by repeating it back to you, which can be done without comprehension.
- Seat the learner with APD with a clear view of the teacher at all times to allow them to lip-read what the teacher says more easily.
- Ensure that the learner has a clear view of any board used to provide written information, provide written information on the board when speaking and written additional instructions on paper for the learner to refer to when they are attempting a piece of work. This will ensure that the learner has visual reinforcement of the oral instructions and that the learner is given a sense of security in an area that has previously been a situation of failure.
- Try to explain the purpose of the task you want the learner to perform, as many with APD are visual spatial learners who respond better to the whole concept, rather than asking them to perform an abstract exercise.
- Always use the same vocabulary for specific task requests, and be very precise with your instructions, allowing the learner to complete each stage before going on to the next e.g. Ask the learner to “put his pencils in the pot” and then “put his book on the pile”, instead of asking him to “tidy up”. There is a need to build up a process of associations so that general requests can eventually be used.
- Always present instructions in small easy steps to avoid confusion, allowing sufficient time to complete one section before going on to the next.
- Ensure the learner understands what they are expected to do and encourage them to ask for help. It takes extra time for them to process information, so check with them in case they have not understood and do not have the confidence say so. Those with APD are not immediately aware that they have not understood something that has just been explained to them; it may appear to make sense until they try to use the information and they find they have missed something or they may be unaware they have misunderstood. They may not have understood any of it and appear as if they have not heard any of it. (Many can train themselves to just listen to a speaker, and try to record the message in their long-term memories and then replay it later to try and make sense of what was said. When doing this they will not try to ask questions as it stops the recording flow, and cannot answer questions asked of them).
- Allow extra time to complete tasks to allow for delays in processing and transference of information. It may help to ask the learner with APD a question, and prefix by saying I will ask you this question and come back to you in a moment for your answer. This will give the learner an some extra time to process the question; and to formulate and process an answer

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- Ensure the learner with APD has a quiet working environment, as many can be easily distracted by background noise and conversation by other pupils. Also try to limit visual distractions. Try to ensure that other pupils understand that they should not be disturbed when working. Use of FM and soundfield systems aids some with APD and should be investigated.
- Ensure all ambient noise is suppressed wherever possible by use of carpet in classrooms, displays on walls and even tennis balls or other padding on the bottom of chair and table legs.
- Learners with APD find it difficult to process more than one source of auditory input. So group conversations and debates are difficult, if not impossible, to process as they happen. To help with this, place a learner with APD in as small a group as possible as they cope better in one to one or small groups settings.
- Learners with APD will most certainly be lacking self-esteem and confidence in both educational and social settings. They are often called lazy or slow, or told that the difficulties they are experiencing is a direct result of a bad attitude. This is damaging and a positive learning environment is essential. Every effort should be made to promote a sense of self-worth.
- The lack of confidence and self-esteem in learners with APD means that in many circumstances they may leave things to the last minute. This is caused by confusion in ascertaining what is expected. This sometimes means learners find starting a task difficult and this can be misconstrued as laziness or negative behaviour. They may need a great deal of help in planning a piece of work.
- Learners with APD are very vulnerable in a social setting because of their difficulty in processing conversation, and in word retrieval, which makes them more susceptible to bullying. Any negativity in this respect shown to them by a teacher can spread to their peers, and this should be not be tolerated.
- Encouraging self-advocacy to their peers is essential. They need to understand and make others aware that they will always be like this, and they will need to be able to explain that they have a disability to friends, teachers, and adults. A class or whole-school presentation by staff on what APD means in real terms would help with this.
- Learners with APD may have some problems absorbing information from text. Allow time for delayed processing. Use a more visual approach to teaching, such as picture associations, coloured text, and different formatting of text to make information stand out.
- Provide a printed timetable, preferably pictorial, to help with organisational skills. Also a homework timetable and a copy for parents, so that they can help the learner understand what they have to do, and explain it in terms that they can more easily understand. Parents cannot help if they do not know what the learner is expected to do.

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- Provide a home/school book so that the parents can provide feedback. This can provide a means of communication between the parents and teachers, enabling the parents to explain what the learner has found easy or difficult, and which coping strategies they use to complete the task. This will help the teacher build up a better picture of the way the learner learns and increasing the teacher's ability to accommodate their learning style, which is essential.
- Help the learner to build coping routines, daily and weekly. Coping routines are built on life experiences and at a young age this is difficult as the learner does not have too many to fall back on, but small routines can grow. Also the learner with APD needs to continually review these routines both new and old, as some new routines may bypass existing routines. A task that they can do one day using a coping routine they might be unable to do the next day. Ask the learner how they cope with a new task. Both learner and teacher should be involved in this development process.
- Learners with APD may have to work out the basic concept of what any theory means from basics each time they want to use it. Any interruption or break from their thought patterns during this process may require them to restart their understanding from the beginning all over again. This is particularly relevant to the learning of Mathematics. This is why some prefer to start a project and see it through to its conclusion, regardless of any time factors; partly because it has taken them so long to plan and start the task that they may forget what to do if it is left unfinished.
- Multiplication tables sometimes present problems for learners with APD. If the learner understands the basic theory for the existence of tables (a practical use, as a visual guide) then they can begin to build a list of associations, which give meaning to tables and can create some coping strategies. If learning tables is an ongoing problem, provide the learner with a ready-printed multiplication square to use, as many learners may never learn them.
- APD learners may have a problem in retrieving words from their long-term memory which can be a problem in conversation, oral work or presentations. If they are telling you something; they may take time to think of the right words and if interrupted may forget what they were saying altogether, which can be very distressing. Word retrieval is also a major problem in producing written work, so extra time should be allowed for this as well as their overall slow processing difficulties.
- The suggestions on **Appendix 3**, the ways in which parents can help, will also provide schools with a greater understanding of APD in all settings and is beneficial in providing overall support for the learner with APD which does not only affect school life. Please pass on copies to parents so that they can also help at home and refer them to APDUK for support.