

Auditory processing and epilepsy



The impact of epilepsy is variable – some students are greatly affected while others are not.

Auditory processing refers to an individual's ability to analyse or make sense of information taken in through the ears. This is different from problems involving hearing. An auditory processing deficit can interfere directly with speech and language, but can affect all areas of learning. It underlies a difficulty with attention and concentration. There are some specific factors which may cause auditory processing difficulties for a student with epilepsy.

Possible causes of auditory processing difficulties

- Difficulties may be directly linked to a student's medication and/or seizure activity or to an underlying neurological abnormality.

Possible indicators of auditory processing difficulties

- Doesn't appear to hear or listen, though this can be intermittent.
- Unable to follow instructions given verbally.
- May have difficulty recalling information from a story or news article.
- Unable to blend individual phonemes (sounds) to form words.
- May appear to process a message but then gets information confused.
- Reacts negatively to noise.



How teachers can help

- Teachers do not have the skills to diagnose an auditory processing disorder in a student, but can identify potential problems and refer appropriately.
- Identify the student's most efficient learning style and use it consistently to support and increase their understanding of a concept.
- Seat the student towards the front of the classroom to lessen distractions.
- Simplify instructions and have them written down as a follow up to verbal instructions.
- Always get the student's attention before asking a question or giving information, and have them rephrase instructions given to ensure they understand.



Strategies to try

- Reciting rhyming poems and riddles, using them for reading opportunities and also giving the student an opportunity to create their own rhyming poems and/or riddles, is a great way to build the student's phonological awareness.
- Read and retell activities to help develop auditory memory skills.
- After an excursion or special event, have the student sequence the activities which occurred.
- Give the student a series of words or pictures and have them name the category to which they belong, e.g. object, person and place.
- Mind maps and graphic organisers are a great strategy for the student to use to support their processing of complex information.