



Auditory Processing Disorder

What does it look like?

Auditory processing disorder (APD) makes it difficult for children to understand what they are hearing; and this makes learning much harder for them than for other pupils.

If a child has APD it means that they will have difficulty with a number of the following aspects of learning:

- Difficulties in following more than one instruction at a time.
- They will find it difficult to follow an activity or teaching session which has no visual input (pictures/ videos).
- They often don't process what is said the first time, so it will need to be repeated. If the teacher raises their voice on having to repeat the instruction they will be taken aback, as they probably don't realise it's been said before!
- Noisy classrooms will cause them to be very uncomfortable, upset, or anxious.
- Their difficulty in processing may make them seem disinterested, when the effort of staying tuned in becomes too much.
- Problems with attention and staying focused on what is being said.
- They may also have a limited memory for strings of words, and will struggle with complex language like word puzzles, riddles etc.
- They may not hear the difference in words that sound similar, such as swap and swat, or page and paid.
- They can miss the point of jokes, because they haven't processed the whole thing fully.
- They will have expressive language difficulties, and will tend to speak in simple sentences.
- Reading and comprehension tasks will be difficult, and they may have trouble with vocabulary and spelling.

These difficulties will result in different behaviours and problems for different children, but without support they will lead to frustration and a loss of confidence for the pupil. Here are some ways they can be supported within the classroom:

What can teachers do to help?

If you are a teacher of a pupil with APD, it is important that you are aware of the difficulties they may have, and adapt your teaching style accordingly.

It's important to speak clearly when presenting information; don't act as though you are speaking to a toddler! Make it clear without being patronising.

It will be very supportive of their learning if you could give them information about the lesson to read beforehand – this could be a homework, or time could be given at the beginning of a lesson. You could set a YouTube video on the subject as a homework to encourage familiarity (make sure you check the content!)

Most teachers now will have a vocabulary list for their subject, and will give this out to pupils so that they can refer to it if difficult or technical words come up.

It would be very good practice to provide homework on clearly written sheets; ideally showing the coming week's homework.

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In the classroom:

- If the pupil is easily distracted, sit them away from high traffic points, such as the desk near the door or a place that everyone has to pass. Windows can also be very distracting and can be the source of noisy interference.
- Keep coming back to key phrases and information throughout the lesson.
- Rephrase to add another level of understanding.
- Avoid monologues without any visual aids – use pictures, videos and relevant objects to illustrate your lessons.
- Make your communication accessible by using open expressions and gestures.
- Make use of whiteboards, computers, flipcharts etc. – be creative!
- Be aware of the pupil's strengths and interests and give them an opportunity to use these
- If the pupil has access to an assistive listening device, support them in using it in your classroom. It may also be helpful to allow another pupil to share their notes with them.
- Chunking: break longer tasks down into more manageable chunks.
- If it's not a spelling test, don't penalise the pupil for spelling errors.