A child can be described as a slow learner if his or her thinking skills develop at a notably slower rate than that of his or her peers. The child will carry on through the exact same developmental stages as his or her peers but at a comparatively slow rate. Also, the child typically has below-average intelligence.

**Typical characteristics of slow learners**

The typical characteristics of a slow learner are found to be as follows:

**Learning issues**

Slow learners tend to learn slower and are, in most cases, unable to retain what they learn. They also have a very short attention span. Learning does not happen incidentally for slow learners and they have to be directly taught. And they cannot link one learning to another unless specifically told. They are also unable to apply certain learning or concept in different situations without help – which is why they require rigorous concrete teaching and cannot make do with abstract teaching. Slow learners, due to these reasons, are mostly “underachievers”.

**Social issues**

The social behavioural pattern of slow learning children is mostly immature and unstable. They lack judgement and can sometimes get aggressive about petty issues. They are self-conscious, tend to daydream a lot and love to spend time in solitude or in the company of younger children. They may not be verbally appropriate while working in a group and their mood can change in a split second. Slow learners often portray antisocial characteristics.

**Auditory issues**

Identification of sounds is difficult for slow learners and thus, provide irrelevant answers when a question is asked. They find it hard to write from dictation and prefer visual presentation of materials over oral presentation.

**Visual-motor issues**

Slow learners with visual-motor issues prefer oral learning over visual learning. They find it difficult to differentiate between objects of different sizes, colour, and shape. They cannot make sense of similar-looking objects and have difficulty recalling them. They often have poor handwriting and like to take up part learning instead of whole learning. Slow learners may complain about various physical problems and may have awkward physical movements.

**Language issues**

Children who are slow learners find it hard to express themselves verbally and [**cannot articulate easily.**](https://www.hopscotch.in/blog/how-speech-therapy-worked-for-my-son/) They cannot fully make us understand what they intend to tell us. Also, reading something silently is easier than reading out loud for them.

**Tips to assist a slow learner**

* **Give him/her a quiet study table:**Slow learners get distracted easily so find your child a spot to study where there are zero distractions.
* **Ask questions:**Ask your child questions like, “What do you make of this?”, “Can you tell me how this is different from this?”, “What do you think this word means?” and so on.
* **Be easily accessible:**Don’t make your child feel he or she is eating up your time. Help him or her in every way possible – not by completing his or her given assignments but by guiding him through the process.
* **Give small tasks:**The short attention span is a consistent issue so only give short assignments.
* **Don’t let them give up:**Slow learners need more time than their peers to understand a concept or finish a task – which can leave them pretty exhausted. Don’t overwork them to the extent that they give up. Give them a break if need be.
* **Don’t label them:**Don’t keep mentioning the fact that your child is a slow learner and that he or she can’t achieve as much as his or her peers. Be supportive all the way.
* **Be patient:**Be as patient as you possibly can and be their advocate. Make sure your child is keeping up with the school curriculum or is at least trying his best to do this.

Every child is special and has talents of their own. More often than not, it has been noticed that slow learners, children with ADD/ADHD, autism or other learning disabilities show immense potential in the creative and performing arts. So, do not lose hope. With your effort, your child will shine and make you proud!

**Teaching ideas for Slow learners:** A picture containing icon

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**Drill**

One commonsense strategy for teaching slow learners is repetition: drill, drill, drill until they get it. Make sure lessons are reviewed frequently. Repeat instructions for activities, and have students repeat them back. Vary the repetition by doing it verbally sometimes and in writing sometimes. Slow learners are apt to focus on the details of a lesson and miss the main points. Make sure you list the main takeaway points in any lesson and reiterate them multiple times while you teach.

**Multimodal Approach**

Use different modes of instruction to convey the same lesson. Show pictures and videos, conduct games and group activities and provide hands-on tools that can reinforce learning. Have students build models, paint pictures or act out scenes that explain an idea. Give students mnemonics that will help them memorize the names of the planets or trigonometric ratios. Use tools such as charts, posters and word lists on classroom walls, word markers to guide reading and graph paper to help keep place values in line for math.

**Personalization**

Many slow learners suffer from low self-esteem and lack confidence. You can address this not only by praising small achievements but also by personalizing lessons. Introduce topics that are of special interest to the student in question, make up math problems about the student and his friends and make sure you provide some activities the student can be successful at every day in the classroom. Find out which mode of instruction best suits a particular student -- verbal, visual or kinesthetic -- and try to provide reinforcers in that mode.

**Mediated Learning**

While intelligence is generally considered to be static, many educators believe higher order thinking skills -- automatically used by more intelligent students -- can be taught explicitly to slow learners. This is made possible through mediated learning. The average student placed in a stimulating environment naturally picks up information and ideas. A slow learner needs a mediator who can interpret the environment and each learning step for the student. Critical skills, such as making connections between lessons taught in different areas, can be explicitly taught through the process of mediation.

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