

## “Learning disabilities” use in Content users

### Problem:

Learning disability has different meanings in North America and other countries such as UK/Europe. These meanings do not necessarily overlap (see [discussion from a UK perspective](#)). It is unlikely that we will come to a consensus on an acceptable definition within the available time frame. Also, if we are struggling to agree a definition in the group, this could be an indication that we have not used it consistently with the document during the collaborative writing process.

The glossary is intended to support the Content Usable document and make it easier for a wide readership to understand. At this time, it is not intended to be a standalone glossary. Therefore we should focus on ensuring that we have used terminology correctly and clearly within the document if we are unable to provide clear, unambiguous definitions.

### Proposal:

We should review how we have used the phrase “learning disability” in the Content Usable document to clarify what we mean.

Proposed actions to undertake during editing process:

#### 1. Remove learning disabilities in isolation from the glossary

Due to learning disabilities being a term that can cause confusion, our goal is to minimise the use of the term “learning disabilities” on its own. We should therefore no longer require a separate entry for learning disability in the glossary. “Cognitive and learning disabilities” would still be included in the glossary.

#### 2. Add example referring to learning disability/difficulties in [section 2.2](#)

In some sections we discuss ideas related to cognitive and learning disability/difficulties, but we do not have learning difficulties examples.

Include an additional example in section 2.2 that references learning difficulties.

For example “People with cognitive disabilities that impact learning may need more support or time to complete a new process or an authentication task.”

#### 3. Replace learning disabilities with intellectual disabilities where appropriate

Where using “learning disability” to refer to general learning or intellectual disability, we use “intellectual disability” for clarity.

This term is familiar to disability professionals (even if not the preferred term in the country) and can be understood by a lay person. We should include a definition of

intellectual disability within the glossary. This is the term used in DSM-5 and is widely used internationally.

#### **4. Use specific diagnosis term where possible**

Where using “learning disability” to refer to a learning difficulty in a certain area then we should replace that term with a more specific diagnosis if it is localised to a specific skill.

In the following example, learning disability has been replaced with dyslexia:

“As a user with a language impairment, dyslexia and/or a memory impairment, I want the language used to be clear and easy for me to understand so that I can understand the content.”

This would replace.....

#### **5. Use Cognitive disabilities instead of learning disabilities**

When using learning disabilities to cover a wider range of impairment, consider whether “cognitive disabilities” or “cognitive and learning disabilities” could be used.

Using “cognitive disabilities” would be more inclusive of users with age-related disabilities or impairments that involve memory, processing or executive function.

In the following example, learning disability has been replaced with cognitive disability:

“Sometimes content is usable by people with one cognitive disability but not a different one. For example, content with fewer words and more numbers may be perfect for some users with dyslexia or autism spectrum disorder, but inaccessible for people with dyscalculia who struggle with numeric information.”

After undertaking these actions, then including a definition of learning disabilities will be lower priority and may be covered by the information in the document describing cognitive and learning disabilities in section 2.2.

### **Use of learning disability within the document:**

The phrase learning disabilities is mainly used as part of the phrase “cognitive and learning disabilities”. There are 15 occasions where it is used on its own. Of these only 4 appear without mention of other disabilities (highlighted).

#### **3.1.2 User Story: Clear Operation**

As a user with a memory impairment, a learning disability, or a communication disability who uses symbols, and/or executive function impairment,

As a user with a language impairment, learning disability and/or a memory impairment, I want the language used to be clear and easy for me to understand so that I can understand the content.

### **3.3.2 User Story: Visual Presentation**

As a user with a language impairment, learning disability and/or an impaired memory, I want a page layout that helps me follow and understand the content without getting overwhelmed.

#### **4.2.4.3 How it Helps**

someone with a learning disability is not sure if this application has too many steps and if they will manage. By seeing they are half-way through they can gauge if they can cope with the entire process.

#### **4.4.1.3 How it Helps**

This benefits many people including those with language impairments, learning disabilities and a poor memory.

#### **4.4.2.3 How it Helps**

Using simple tense and voice benefits many people including those with language impairments, learning disabilities or a poor memory.

#### **4.4.3.3 How it Helps**

Simple sentence structure benefits many people including those with language impairments, learning disabilities or a poor memory.

#### **4.4.5.3 How it Helps**

People with poor memory or anyone who is easily distracted will benefit. This also helps people with learning disabilities related to processing speed or language.

#### **4.4.9.3 How it Helps**

Step-by-step instructions benefit many people including those with language impairments, learning disabilities or a poor memory.

#### **4.4.13.2 How it Helps**

Not all people can understand numbers and numerical concepts.

For example, some people have dyscalculia, a learning disability specifically-related to mathematics.

#### **4.5 Objective 4**

Completing forms and similar tasks is often overwhelming for most users with cognitive and learning disabilities. This includes relatively minor learning disabilities, such as Dyslexia, or attention related disabilities.

Many users with learning disabilities cannot remember numbers, such as those for their post/zip code, Social Security, or credit card.

#### **4.7.5.3 How it Helps**

Often content has barriers which prevent users with learning disabilities from completing a step, and as a result, prevents them from achieving whatever they wished to achieve.

#### **4.8.5.3 How it Helps**

For example, a user with a learning disability struggles to use an ecommerce site. They have an idea on how to make it much easier to use. They spend an hour trying to give the feedback and then they stop trying. The site continues to lose customers.

#### **4.8.7.3 How it Helps**

For example, a user with a learning disability set a doctor's appointment online. Often they copy the detailing incorrectly onto their calendar.

#### **5.1 Usability Testing Introduction**

Sometimes content is usable by people with one learning disability but not a different one. For example, content with fewer words and more numbers may be perfect for some users with dyslexia or autism spectrum disorder, but inaccessible for people with dyscalculia who struggle with numeric information

#### **5.5 Testing objectives**

People living with early stage dementia, age appropriate forgetfulness, intellectual disabilities, different specific learning disabilities and communication disorders.

#### **Appendix B**

In addition many sites want to reach user groups such as millennials with learning disabilities and people with age-appropriate forgetfulness.

**Appendix D**

a secondary market of high potential millennials impaired by learning disabilities and related situational impairments.

## Working notes and Countries use of terms

DSM-5 now refers to “Specific learning disorder” and

What is a specific learning disorder:

A note on terminology: Specific learning disorder is a medical term used for diagnosis. It is often referred to as “learning disorder.” “Learning disability” is a term used by both the educational and legal systems. Though learning disability is not exactly synonymous with specific learning disorder, someone with a diagnosis of specific learning disorder can expect to meet criteria for a learning disability and have the legal status of a federally recognized disability to qualify for accommodations and services in school. The term “learning difference” is a term that has gained popularity, especially when speaking with children about their difficulties, as it does not label them as “disordered.”

### **India:**

Specific Learning disability is defined in law:

“Specific Learning Disabilities means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, speak read, spell or to do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia and developmental aphasia. The term does not include children who have learning problems which are primarily the result of visual, hearing or motor handicaps, or mental retardation, emotional disturbance or environmental, cultural or economic disadvantages.”

Federal Register, 1977, p.65083 (Karanth,2002).

Also <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12098-019-03159-0>

### **Australia:**

Learning difficulties and Specific learning difficulty

The term 'Learning Difficulties' most often refers to difficulties in learning to read and write, but is also applied in other areas of learning, including mathematics. Learning difficulties can be caused by internal factors (inherent, medical, physical, neurological), AND/OR, external factors, (family, communities, opportunities, experiences). Internal factors are intrinsic to the individual, can cause a person to learn differently, are usually life-long, and are usually considered a learning disability – also referred to as a specific or significant learning difficulty (in Australia and the UK), or learning disability (in the US and Canada). Dyslexia is generally considered to be a learning disability, or specific learning difficulty.

### **EU:**

Specific Learning difficulties/disabilities

## SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES/DIFFICULTIES (Sp.L.D.) DEFINITIONS

Persons identified as having Sp.L.D. all show different intellectual and emotional profiles, strengths and weaknesses, learning styles and life experiences. Within this context, Sp.L.D. can be identified as distinctive patterns of difficulties, relating to the processing of information, within a continuum from very mild to severe, which may result in restrictions in literacy, language, number, motor function, short term memory and organisational skills.

In practice, the 'experience' of Sp.L.D. and/or experiences which causes individuals to become 'delicate' and vulnerable within an educational setting often leads to a rapid downward spiral in self-esteem/self-concept. Therefore, it is crucial to recognise the additional interrelated emotional and social needs of such 'delicate' and vulnerable individuals. As such, a high priority should be given to providing a learning environment that caters for the diversity of emotional and learning needs in order to help these individuals achieve their potential.

### Hong Kong

[Specific learning difficulties/disorder](#)

### Canada

[Learning disability](#)

## Tracking of the number of occurrences of a term in Content Usable

| Term                             | Number of occurrences |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Learning disability (on its own) | 15                    |
| Dyslexia                         | 7                     |
| Dyspraxia                        | 0                     |
| Dyscalculia                      | 6                     |
| Attention impairment / AD(H)D    | 17                    |
| Memory impairment                | 13                    |
| Language impairment              | 12                    |
| Processing difficulty            | ~13                   |
| Intellectual disability          | 8                     |
| Working memory                   | 11                    |

|                                |                   |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Short-term / short term memory | 8 (2 with hyphen) |
| Long term memory               | 0                 |
| Executive function             | 26                |