

Special Education Support Service: Down Syndrome Modifying Worksheets

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Many classroom activities start from written instructions on the board, from worksheets or from textbooks. Many teachers utilise, when appropriate, modified worksheets for pupils. Although modified worksheets should by no means be used as the sole form of differentiation and their purpose should be carefully considered, they can make a valuable contribution to the bank of resources for pupils with Down syndrome.

Points to Consider when Modifying Worksheets/Text

- Pupils with Down syndrome characteristically rely on their visual learning skills rather than their auditory skills. Poor short term auditory memory, poor auditory discrimination and possibly a
- Fluctuating hearing loss, all combine to make learning by auditory means alone very difficult. On the other hand, the combination of strong visual skills with the ability to read means that the use of modified worksheets, using the printed word with pictures and diagrams for reinforcement is often extremely useful.
- In preparing worksheets for a student with Down syndrome the following tips, adapted from Lewis (1995) may be helpful:
 - i) Use meaningful material within or close to the pupil's experience.
 - ii) Introduce new concepts in a familiar context.
 - iii) Make the tasks self contained.
 - iv) Provide plenty of visual cues- pictures, diagrams and print.
 - v) Ensure illustrations tie in closely with text and task.
 - vi) Give plenty of opportunities for success.
 - vii) Use the pupil's feedback to decide whether or not the worksheet fulfils your educational aims and objectives.
 - viii) Supplement the worksheet with a taped version of the task instructions, which the pupil can play for reinforcement.

- ix) If possible try out several different versions of the same worksheet to discover what works best for the individual pupil.
- x) Differentiate clearly between text and illustrations.
- xi) Leave a wide border all round the edge of the page.
- xii) Highlight and explain key words and any that are new to the pupil.
- xiii) Illustrate key words if possible.
- xiv) Use type or print not handwriting.
- xv) Use subheadings to break down and structure the written sheet.
- xvi) Use a simple uncluttered layout. Too busy a page causes confusion.
- xvii) Break up continuous text. Highlight instructions in some way: in a box, particular font or colour.
- xviii) Use coloured as well as white paper, both for variety and to help the pupil distinguish one subject area from another.
- xix) Use simple and familiar language. Keep sentences short and concise.
- xx) Avoid ambiguous words. Use active rather than passive verbs.

References

Lewis, A. (1995) Primary special needs and the National Curriculum, London, UK: Routledge.