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## Accessible Mainstreet – Tipsheet

# What You Need To Know About Customers Who Have Learning Disabilities

Everyone is different in some way. Each of us has a different way of doing things and there are some things we can't do without some help from people, or from machines and products that are easy to use.

Learning disabilities can result in a host of different communication difficulties for people. They can be subtle, as in having difficulty reading, or more pronounced, but they can interfere with your customer's ability to receive, express or process information. You may not be able to know that someone has one of these disabilities unless you are told, or you notice the way people act, ask questions or body language. Be supportive and patient.

Here are some tips on serving customers with learning disabilities:

- ❖ Patience and a willingness to find a way to communicate are your best tools.
- ❖ When you know that someone with a learning disability needs help, ask how you can best help.
- ❖ Speak normally and clearly, and directly to your customer
- ❖ Take some time — people with some kinds of disabilities may take a little longer to understand and respond.
- ❖ Try to find ways to provide information in a way that works best for them. For example, have a paper and pen handy.
- ❖ If you're dealing with a child, be patient, encouraging and supportive.
- ❖ Don't refer to the disability, and never use phrases like "handicapped".
- ❖ Be courteous and patient and your customer will let you know how to best provide service in a way that works for them.
- ❖ Every business should have emergency procedures for customers with disabilities. Make sure you know what they are.

**Additional Tipsheets can be found at:**  
[www.toronto-bia.com/resources/tipsheets.php](http://www.toronto-bia.com/resources/tipsheets.php)

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*Based on: "May I Help You?" – Welcoming Customers with Disabilities" Resource Package, Accessibility Directorate of Ontario, Ministry of Community and Social Services, 2005*