

Using MindManager as an assistive tool for individuals with learning differences

MindManager is committed to creating content that meets the needs of all customers.

This e-book is designed to be reader-friendly to individuals who may have learning differences and/or identify as neurodivergent.



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A note to our readers

According to [SMARTS](#), which creates user-friendly curriculums for learners with challenges:

Many people [prefer to use the terminology](#) “learning differences” or “learning challenges” instead of “learning disabilities.”

Some are concerned that the term “learning disability” focuses on an individual’s cognitive weaknesses and isolates them from other learners.

The term “learning differences” highlights the fact that they simply learn differently than others do.

While “learning disability” is not pejorative, by definition, it fails to encompass the advantages that can come from having a diagnosed learning disability.

For example, individuals with dyslexia have been shown to have better three-dimensional spatial reasoning, understanding of abstract information and connections between concepts, and higher levels of creativity.

The terms “neurodivergent” and “neurodiversity” [are also preferred](#) by many individuals (and medical professionals) instead of the word “disability.”

This is because of the very real bias that exists against those with disabilities, particularly [in the workplace](#).

As such, please note that we use the term “learning differences” in place of “learning disabilities” in many instances throughout this e-book.



2. Introduction

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Introduction

Assistive technology (AT) encompasses all products, equipment, and systems that enhance learning, working, and daily living for persons with learning differences or disabilities.

Approximately 2.5% of children in the UK are believed to have a learning disability or difference.

Among children aged 0-17 years, there are approximately 353,000 children with a learning disability or difference in the UK.

According to Statistics Canada, of all the children with disabilities in the country, more than half (59.8%) have a learning disability or difference.

In the US, over 4 million children have at least one learning disability or difference. This means that one in 59 children, or 1.69% of children nationwide, are affected.

That said, learning differences are more common than we think.

That's why assistive technology is becoming increasingly indispensable for individuals who experience these challenges.

AT allows people with learning differences to enhance their skills in certain areas by fostering independence through the use of various technologies.



It's used for learners who have difficulty speaking, writing, typing, remembering, seeing, hearing, and other challenges.

And it can play an invaluable role in providing support to those with learning differences.

One type of assistive technology is mind mapping and diagramming software, such as [MindManager®](#).

Mind mapping software assists learners with common tasks such as:

- Outlining written documents.
- Brainstorming ideas.
- Organizing thoughts.
- Decision making.
- Stimulating memory recall (which helps with executing these tasks).

In this e-book, we'll explore:

- What a learning difference is.
- Examples of some of the most common types of learning differences.
- How mind mapping software like MindManager can help those with these differences learn and work more independently.

Becca Chambers is Senior Vice President of Global Communications at Corel®.

She's also a proud member of and [advocate for](#) the neurodivergent community.

"I was diagnosed with a learning difference as an adult, and the diagnosis wasn't troubling; it was freeing," Chambers says. It shed light on decades of previous struggles."

"I also have a child with a learning difference. It's critical for me, for him, and for the millions of others who process information and learn differently to create resources that not only accommodate our differences but celebrate them," she emphasizes.

"Neurodiversity is diversity. I'm proud to be part of an organization that considers neurodiversity as a source of innovation and enrichment."

"Corel also walks the walk by creating industry-leading assistive technologies."



3. What is a learning difference?

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The term learning disabilities, or learning differences, refers to certain types of disorders.

These disorders may affect the acquisition, organization, retention, understanding, or use of verbal or nonverbal information.

They also affect learning abilities in individuals who otherwise demonstrate at least average abilities essential for thinking and/or reasoning.

It's important to recognize that learning differences are not all the same.

Differences can range in severity, and may interfere with the acquisition and use of one or more of the following:

- **Oral language**
(E.g., listening, speaking, and understanding).
- **Reading**
(E.g., decoding, phonetic knowledge, word recognition, and comprehension).
- **Written language**
(E.g., spelling, and written expression).
- **Mathematics**
(E.g., computation, and problem solving).

Learning differences may also involve difficulties with organizational skills, social perception, social interaction, and perspective taking.





4. What are examples of different types of learning differences?

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The term “learning disabilities” or “learning differences” can be thought of as an umbrella term.

It describes several specific learning challenges, which can include:

- **Dyslexia.** Affects reading and related language-based processing skills.

For example, learners with dyslexia may learn to spell a word one day and then completely forget how to spell it the next day.
- **Dyscalculia.** Affects a person’s ability to understand numbers and learn mathematics.

For example, learners may find it hard to understand math word problems and learn basic math like addition, subtraction, and multiplication.

- **Dysgraphia.** Affects a person’s handwriting ability and fine motor skills.

For example, learners with dysgraphia may write more slowly than others which can affect how well they express themselves.





5. What is mind mapping?

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Mind mapping is a visual approach to understanding information.

Mind maps break down complicated information into more manageable chunks, which can be arranged into topics, and sub-topics.

This makes the information much easier to understand for learners with differences.

Mind maps also transform monotonous information into more interesting, structured, and highly organized diagrams.

These diagrams better align with the brain's natural way of thinking.

A mind map's natural structure starts in the middle and then radiates from the center.

It uses lines, words, symbols, graphics, and even colors to organize ideas.





6. How mind mapping software empowers individuals with learning differences

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Visualizations are the [easiest way](#) for our brains to receive and interpret large amounts of information.

That's why a visual tool like mind mapping is so effective.

Mind maps break down complex information to make performing everyday tasks easier, especially for those with learning differences.

Here are four of the top benefits of mind mapping software designed for learners with differences:

1. **Visualization.** [Visualization](#) clarifies thoughts, bolsters concentration, and helps reduce distractions.
2. **Increased clarity by breaking down complex information.** Mind mapping helps learners free their minds from perceived obstacles.

These maps break down complex information into chunks.

This helps bring greater clarity and structure to projects so learners can succeed at completing them.

Maps also provide a visual overview of projects to enable faster decision making, which can lead to improved results.

3. **Collaboration.** In some instances, it may be hard for learners with learning differences to collaborate effectively with classmates.

For example, learners may be unable to communicate exactly what information they're looking for when it comes to collaborating on a project.

With the [co-editing](#) feature in MindManager, learners can seamlessly collaborate on project maps and diagrams together in real time.

They're able to do this no matter where they're located and no matter which platform they may be accessing MindManager from.

In addition, [MindManager fully integrates with Microsoft Teams](#).

This integration enables group members to facilitate dynamic planning, brainstorming, whiteboarding, and more, without ever leaving the app.

Users can collaborate to create structured, interactive visual maps that make information easier for learners to understand.

4. Organize and structure ideas.

MindManager provides the ability to [organize and structure](#) important information in one place, such as links, documents, images, notes, and data.

This means learners don't have to access multiple documents, helping keep things simple and their attention focused.

Certain mind mapping features can have a significant positive impact on individuals with learning challenges.

Six of these features include:

1. Drag and drop.

[Our minds work in a non-linear fashion.](#)

By having the ability to simply [drag and drop](#) ideas anywhere on the map, learners can more easily organize their thoughts and stay on track.

MindManager helps learners get their ideas down as quickly as they can think of them.

The best part?

Learners can seamlessly move thoughts and ideas around anytime they want by dragging and dropping them where they need to go within a map or diagram.



2. Priority markers.

To help learners stay on track, they can make use of [priority markers](#).

This MindManager feature provides an at-a-glance view of what requires immediate attention and what can wait until a later date. This helps learners stay focused on what matters most.

- 3. Filtering.** It's likely that learners might want to revisit a task later.

Instead of having to search the entire mind map, learners can simply [filter](#) their map's view to find what they're looking for.

- 4. Topic info cards.** It can be very overwhelming for learners to have a lot of text and/or information displayed to them at any one time.

With [topic info cards](#) in MindManager, learners can hide supplemental information to keep their maps clear of clutter without losing access to maps.

This feature allows users to even drag and drop information in from other cards and vice versa.

- 5. Capture content from anywhere.**

With [MindManager Snap](#), learners can snap up ideas or content in real time.

This content can then be easily sent to themselves or their classmates.

Once MindManager is reopened, users will see any content waiting in their Snap queue for easy access.

This eliminates the need to go back and forth between articles and other

documents—everything is easily managed in one place.

- 6. Built-in templates.** MindManager comes with many [built-in templates](#).

This allows learners to immediately start putting plans and projects together, without having to create a template from scratch.

If learners would rather design the template themselves, that option is also available.

Learners can think of MindManager as their personal [whiteboard](#). Whiteboards are extremely valuable when it comes to visually supporting group discussions.

Virtual whiteboards allow learners to work through plans and concepts more efficiently (whether in person or remotely).

They also offer a range of built-in mapping, diagramming, and charting templates.

Another benefit for learners is that MindManager is a widespread application in the professional world.

This means that learners who learned to use MindManager in K12 or undergraduate settings can then transfer their MindManager skills to the workplace.



7. MindManager as an assistive tool for individuals with learning differences

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MindManager is an ideal assistive tool for individuals with learning differences.

Learners can use this tool to tackle information overload and cut through distractions to stay focused on tasks.

MindManager also allows learners to use different views when looking at maps.

Examples include outline, Gantt chart, schedule, icon, and tag views.

This feature helps users gain a different, sometimes more helpful, perspective on a project and feel less overwhelmed.

Learners can also view their maps at any time, from anywhere with MindManager Go for iOS and Android mobile devices.

This application makes MindManager more accessible and enables learners to use the platform they prefer.

MindManager can help learners with differences tackle many daily academic tasks.



These include:

- **Note taking.** Learners can more easily capture notes during lectures in a way that works best for them.
- **Planning.** Planning things such as projects, essays, and other assignments becomes much easier with MindManager.
- **Organize homework, assignments, and due dates in a central place.** Visual alerts in MindManager help avoid missed tasks, which helps keep learners organized.
- **Studying.** Once mind maps are complete, they can be referred to later when it comes time to study and prepare for exams.

With information stored all in one place, learners can access the information they need just by opening their mind maps.
- **Creating visual connections between concepts and course topics.** This is enabled by the ability to visually tag and group complementary ideas together.
- **Enhance learning material.** This can be done through personalized visual cues—such as images, colors, and icons—to highlight key concepts.

- **Use visualization to organize thoughts more effectively.** Visualization helps to improve study sessions, test-taking, writing assignments, and more.
- **Conduct research more efficiently.** By organizing findings into topics and subtopics, learners can use attachments and links to centralize essential information.
- **Boost long-term information retention.** Using interactive visual learning provides a deeper understanding of ideas and concepts.
- **Participate in remote group collaboration.** [Microsoft Teams integration for MindManager](#) and real-time [co-editing](#) enable learners to interact with group members remotely.





8. Conclusion

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Conclusion

MindManager includes highly visual features and capabilities that can be customized in almost any way.

This allows individuals with learning differences or similar challenges to benefit considerably numerous ways.

As an assistive learning tool, mind mapping can help learners:

- Organize ideas more clearly.
- Better understand complex concepts.
- Arrange information in a way that makes the most sense to them.

Mind mapping also helps learners take better notes in class, plan for upcoming schoolwork, stay organized, and study more effectively.

As a result, tools like MindManager can have a significant positive impact on learners' academic and everyday lives.

[Learn more about MindManager as an assistive tool for individuals with learning differences.](#)



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