

Bridging Over Learning Difficulties

A Handbook to Assist in Mentoring and Tutoring
Students with Challenges in Learning



Created by youth volunteers and staff of the EPIC Youth Peer Program
with the guidance of Youth Peer Educational Liaison
Elizabeth Broderick

Sponsored by the IWK Foundation

Produced by Educational Program Innovations Charity Society
Sydney, Nova Scotia Canada
March 31, 2010

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Acknowledgments

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Youth Volunteer Profiles



My name is Celine Cooke. I am currently in grade 12. I plan to obtain a career in Social Work in the future. I have been a volunteer with the Youth Peer Program for 3 years. The topic I worked on was Autism Spectrum Disorder.



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My name is Christine MacLaughlin. I am currently in grade 10. I plan to obtain a career in Social Work in the future. I have been a volunteer with the Youth Peer Program for 1 year. The topic I worked on was Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Project Staff Profiles



Elizabeth Geddes Broderick, Coordinator of the **Bridging Over Learning Difficulties** project, had energy to spare when she retired after a distinctive 30 year teaching career, much of it in Elementary Resource. So, in 2007, she became the Educational Liaison for EPIC's after-school Youth Peer Program. In 2009, she volunteered to oversee BOLD. She compiled the most practical materials on learning difficulties, enlisted input from youth volunteers, and identified the most useful information to assist mentor/tutors. This elegantly simple Handbook, embedded with Elizabeth's positive attitude and contagious enthusiasm, is wonderfully helpful for anyone working with kids who struggle to learn.



Catherine Ross graduated in 2009 from the Cape Breton University Bachelor of Community Studies Program with a special interest in Social Work and Education. Her distinctiveness as a volunteer Youth Peer Program mentor/tutor resulted in her being hired as a part-time Program Assistant. Catherine's effectiveness in assisting youth volunteers led to her full-time role in the Youth Advocate Program as the Outreach Associate. In this capacity, she has been particularly helpful in organizing materials, working with youth volunteers, and assisting with the production of the BOLD Handbook.

Bridging Over Learning Difficulties

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Preface

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How to use this handbook

Please read the Preface for an overview of the BOLD Handbook. For tutors of EPIC's Youth Peer Program, the Preface will be a refresher of the tutor training you received. For others working with children who have challenges in learning, the Preface will provide a snapshot of how the BOLD Handbook can be useful to you.

The page on "Behaviours you might observe in your student" describes typical challenges. For example, if you look at the first challenge listed, "Doesn't pay attention," you are directed to a Learning Difficulties page which deals directly with Attention challenges. On that page you will see several Interventions to try as well as an optional reference at the bottom entitled More Information which suggests possible linkages to Specific Diagnoses described at the back of the handbook. The intent is not to encourage labeling of the student by the mentor/tutor, but to provide a deeper understanding of the topic, other behaviours to watch for, and additional interventions which might be helpful.

After the pages on Learning Difficulties is a section on Teaching Strategies. Although these strategies are well known by resource teachers, they are presented in a form which should be readily usable by mentor/tutors, even with limited training and experience. We are convinced that the willingness of a mentor/tutor to help a student freely and to demonstrate patience and compassion in doing so have more far-reaching impact on a challenged learner than having extensive expertise. Fortunately, the educator who spearheaded the BOLD project and supervised the content, Elizabeth Broderick, has all of these qualities.

Who can use this handbook

No two people, even identical twins, are exactly alike. Their thoughts, feelings and reactions are uniquely their own. Most children will do what they are asked to do - if they can. When a student refuses to do his/her work it often means that the task is overwhelming in size or too difficult. Breaking a task into smaller parts can make it seem less complicated and more easily achieved. The BOLD Handbook is meant as a guide to be used in conjunction with your own common sense, intuition, and training. It is designed to assist mentor/tutors in any setting working one-to-one with children who have learning difficulties, with particular benefit to mentor/tutors engaged in the EPIC Youth Peer Program in Sydney, Nova Scotia, where BOLD was conceived and developed by youth volunteers.

The importance of getting to know your student

The relationship that develops between mentor/tutor and student is the most important determinant of fulfillment and learning.

Our students come to us at Youth Peer Program for various reasons. However, there are some traits common to everyone here.

We all want to be accepted. We want to be in a safe environment where we feel comfortable to be ourselves.

For some of the students who come here, Youth Peer is the only place outside their homes where they feel welcome.

That's why your role as a tutor/mentor is so important. Not only do you have the chance to help someone who is having difficulty with his/her school work but you also have the special opportunity to help change someone's life for the better.

During the Youth Peer training you heard about masks people wear, such as "acting the clown" or "faking sick" so that no one will realize he/she can't do the work assigned - so you'll understand if your student doesn't warm up to you right away. The onus is on you as a tutor/mentor to find a way to help your student become brave enough to remove the mask. You can do that by being patient, fair, firm, and friendly, and by making a special effort to get to know him/her, develop a rapport and gain his/her trust. This is a major commitment on your part. To come here each week and try to help someone who doesn't always cooperate can be frustrating.

There might be times when you feel that you are not accomplishing very much. You need to know that it sometimes takes weeks to see even small improvements. You need to be consistent and persistent. Your student needs to know that you will be there for him/her no matter what - that you will not give up trying to help. You need to be a role model and a friend - even when times are tough.

Thomas Edison said, "Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up."

What you can do to help

Focus on one target behaviour at a time:

Pick the behaviour that stands out as most troublesome or disruptive. For example: for "Talking excessively," use a timer when you are in a lesson; tell the student that he/she must listen and not talk for two minutes. Gradually, over several sessions, increase the time with each success - from two minutes to four minutes to six minutes.

Use positive reinforcement:

Try to ignore inappropriate behaviours. Use non-verbal cues such as calmly shaking your head (as if saying "no") to help re-focus your student. Make a BIG DEAL when he/she attains a goal. Always reward with positive feedback - "Great job!", high five, thumbs up, etc.

Be specific:

Often a dilemma for the student is trying to interpret what he/she is being asked to do. For example, if you are working on a math problem with your student, ask her/him to carefully read the problem, draw a picture showing the various parts of the problem, underline the question to be solved, and then complete the exercise.

Be engaged:

Maintain eye contact when giving instructions.
Model excitement and enthusiasm.
Explain the purpose and relevance of each lesson.

Use visual stimuli:

Use color or highlighters.
Use a laser pointer.
Point out key words.
Show with pictures or diagrams.

Limit distractions:

Work in a cubicle.
Turn off cell phones and iPods.

Behaviours you might observe in your student

Doesn't pay attention - go to **Attention** (page 2)

Can't figure out what is being asked - go to **Comprehension** (page 3)

Has difficulty following multi-step directions - go to **Following Directions** (page 5)

Can't do number basics - go to **Math** (page 6)

Can't remember what he/she has studied or read - go to **Memory** (page 7)

Is disorganized - go to **Organization** (page 8)

Can't get started writing ideas on paper - go to **Process of Writing** (page 9)

Can't identify which idea should come first - go to **Sequencing** (page 10)

Knows very few words by sight - go to **Sight Vocabulary/Spelling** (page 11) and **Guided Reading** (page 14)

Struggles with unfamiliar words - go to **Word Attack Skills/Decoding** (page 12) and **Guided Reading** (page 14)

Stumbles over words when reading aloud - go to **Reading Difficulties** (page 44)

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Attention

Challenge:

Your student has difficulty staying on task, has trouble completing tasks.

Interventions:

- 1) Always work in the cubicle and have in sight only materials you need for the task. Do one task at a time.
- 2) Scan for and highlight key words. Ask your student to help you make a list of key words.
- 3) Reduce the length of time your student needs to focus on any particular assignment by breaking each task into ten minute segments. At the end of each segment take a two minute break for a healthy drink or a short walk, and then get back to work.
- 4) If your student gets off track and keeps talking to you about things other than the assignment- say "we'll talk about that later" and be consistent.
- 5) If you still feel that you are not having success - brainstorm with the Volunteers Coordinator or other educational professional.

More Information:

See Specific Diagnoses:

ADD/ADHD (page 35)

Autism Spectrum Disorder (page 36)

Comprehension

Challenge:

Your student reads fluently but he/she cannot repeat or answer questions about the material that he/she has read.

Interventions:

- 1) With your student, scan the material for key words. List the key words. Ask your student to give you one sentence about each word.
- 2) Read the whole assignment first. You and your student can take turns reading. Depending on your student's reading ability you might read a sentence each, a paragraph each, or a page each. Ask your student a comprehension question after each section read.
- 3) Begin with literal questions which do not require inference (reading between the lines) because your student may have difficulty in that area.
- 4) When it's necessary to ask questions requiring inference on the part of your student, ask open-ended questions such as " Why do you think he did that?" and try to help him/her figure out a reasonable response.
- 5) If you still feel that you are not having success- brainstorm with the Volunteers Coordinator or other educational professional.

More Information:

See Guided Reading (page 14)

Fluency

Challenge:

Your student reads word for word, often without expression and spends so much time struggling to figure out problem words that continuity and comprehension are lost.

Interventions:

- 1) With your student, scan the passage to target problem words prior to reading. Practice each problem word, then practice reading the sentence containing it.
- 2) Model reading the selected passage. For example, say to the student "Make it seem as if you are talking to someone."
- 3) Ask your student to read along with you - move your finger above each word slightly faster than your student reads and tell him/her to keep pace.
- 4) Discuss any clues you might be able to get before actually reading the story - title, pictures, characters. The more familiar your student is with the reading material, the more quickly he/she will become fluent.
- 5) If you still feel that you are not having success - brainstorm with the Volunteers Coordinator or other educational professional.

More Information:

See Guided Reading (page 14)

Following Directions

Challenge:

Your student has difficulty following multi-step directions.

Interventions:

- 1) Highlight key words. Discuss the language used in the assignment - make sure your student understands the vocabulary such as Science or Math terms.
- 2) Your student could be overwhelmed by the number of questions or by the page layout - help him/her deal with each task separately.
- 3) Read the direction to your student. Ask him/her to retell the instruction in his/her own words.
- 4) After giving your student specific instructions, model what to do. Then have your student repeat or rephrase the direction.
- 5) If you still feel that you are not having success - brainstorm with the Volunteers Coordinator or other educational professional.

Math

Challenge:

Your student has difficulty understanding basic operations and solving multi-step problems.

Interventions:

- 1) Sometimes the problem is that the student doesn't understand the terminology. Make sure that he/she has access to a dictionary of Math terms. Go over the appropriate definitions with your student and show examples.
- 2) Math has its own language. When presenting any equation ask your student to 'read' it to you - for example 7×9 reads as 7 times 9 which means 7 groups of 9.
- 3) Review the basics and discuss the relationships between operations - for example subtraction is the opposite of addition; multiplication and division are also opposites.
- 4) Sometimes the main problem in problem-solving is knowing what is being asked. Help your student eliminate unimportant information in the problem and ask him/her to underline the question. Always draw a picture of the problem.
- 5) If you still feel that you are not having success - brainstorm with the Volunteers Coordinator or other educational professional.

More Information:

See Solving Integers (page 15)
Dyscalculia (page 38)
Math website: www.amathsdictionaryforkids.com

Memory

Challenge:

Your student has difficulty remembering facts or details he/she has recently studied or read.

Interventions:

- 1) It's possible your student didn't really understand the concept he/she can't remember. Help your student find and highlight key words. Discuss the topic and try to find a real life connection, such as basing the problem on money.
- 2) Use a mnemonic to help remember key words. For example: the colours of the spectrum are in order: Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo and Violet. A mnemonic for this is: "Run Oh You Great Big Irish Villain!"
- 3) Use rhymes to help remember information. For example, in order to remember the number of days in each month say:
"Thirty days has September,
April, June and November.
All the rest have thirty-one
Except February alone
Which has twenty-eight and twenty-nine each leap year."

Help your student make up appropriate rhymes depending on the material to be learned.

- 4) Make charts or outlines.
- 5) If you still feel that you are not having success - brainstorm with the Volunteers Coordinator or other educational professional.

More Information:

See Organization (page 8)
Sequencing (page 10)

Organization

Challenge:

Your student often arrives without necessary materials or with an extremely disorganized array of materials.

Interventions:

- 1) Spend the first five minutes of each session helping your student organize materials. Make a list of required materials for each assignment. Help your student prioritize tasks.
- 2) Ask your student to show you his/her agenda or homework book. Ask your student to explain to you what he/she has for homework. Show your student how to use a calendar to keep track of goals and deadlines.
- 3) Even if your student tells you there is no homework ask to see his/her books/ scribblers from their backpack. You may have to coax a bit - that's okay!
- 4) If there is no homework, ask a Program Assistant to provide you with a work packet. It is better to spend an hour working on something appropriate than to be annoyed because your student didn't bring homework.
- 5) If you still feel that you are not having success - brainstorm with the Volunteers Coordinator or other educational professional.

More Information:

- See Autism Spectrum Disorder (page 36)
Dysgraphia (page 39)
Nonverbal Learning Disorder (page 42)

Process of Writing

Challenge:

Your student has difficulty completing a written assignment.

Interventions:

- 1) Explain to your student that there must be a beginning, middle and end to each piece of writing.
- 2) Help your student develop an outline or framework for the assignment.
- 3) Help your student find a starting point. Using an outline, begin to fill in details.
- 4) In Section 1 (Introduction) - tell the reason for your essay; in Section 2 (Body) - present examples, details, facts to support your statements; in Section 3 (Conclusion) - restate the most important points, draw conclusions, write a brief summary.
- 5) If you still feel that you are not having success - brainstorm with the Volunteers Coordinator or other educational professional.

More Information:

See Graphic Organizers (page 19)

Sequencing

Challenge:

Your student has difficulty organizing in logical order.

Interventions:

- 1) Try using a recipe or sequenced directions for making a craft to show your student that there is one particular aspect which must be considered first.
- 2) Help your student compile sequenced directions for completing a project.
- 3) Help your student develop a visual organizer. For example - the life cycle of a frog: egg ~ tadpole ~ frog.
- 4) Time lines are also useful for explaining the importance of sequence.
- 5) If you still feel that you are not having success - brainstorm with the Volunteers Coordinator or other educational professional.

More Information:

See Guided Reading (page 14)
Reading Difficulties (page 44)

Sight Vocabulary / Spelling

Challenge:

Your student doesn't recognize basic sight words and has difficulty spelling.

Interventions:

- 1) Practice recognizing and spelling 10 sight words per session - use the word list in your student's speller or the Fry's Sight Word List;
- 2) Play a memory game using your student's personal speller or Fry's Sight Word List - using index cards make two copies of 15 words - follow the directions for the commercial Memory game.
- 3) Make a game of the spelling process - play Scrabble, Boggle or Hangman with your student.
- 4) Practice writing new words in the air, on a black or white board or on a word processor.
- 5) If you still feel that you are not having success - brainstorm with the Volunteers Coordinator or other educational professional.

More Information:

See Guided Reading (page 14)
Fry's Sight Word List (page 25)
Reading Difficulties (page 44)

Word Attack Skills / Decoding

Challenge:

Your student doesn't seem to have strategies for figuring out unfamiliar words.

Interventions:

- 1) Ask your student to tell you the beginning and ending sounds of the unfamiliar word - usually students will know beginning and ending consonants and long vowels. Short vowels, blends and middle sounds are often difficult.
- 2) Help your student recognize the short vowel sounds by saying: 'a' as in cat, 'e' as in elephant, 'I' as in igloo, 'o' as in octopus, 'u' as in umbrella
- 3) Help your student look for small words within bigger, problem words such as the word 'together' which can be broken down into 'to' 'get' 'her'.
- 4) Look for word families - example: for the word 'think' look at ink - pink, rink, shrink.
- 5) If you still feel that you are not having success - brainstorm with the Volunteers Coordinator or other educational professional.

More Information:

See Sight Vocabulary/Spelling (page 11)
Guided Reading (page 14)
Reading Difficulties (page 44)

Teaching Strategies

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Guided Reading

Guided reading is a positive supportive approach to teaching independent reading strategies to individuals and small groups. It works best with text that is a little challenging for the students.

Guided reading instruction follows a format that can be successfully followed to assist students to make meaning from print. Pre-reading, reading and post-reading can be used for an effective lesson. The following five steps complete the guided reading process.

Introduction:

Introduce the text. Have the student take a quick look at the title, illustration, topic, characters, story events and key words. Discuss the text asking, "What do you know about the text?", "What do the cover, title, and illustration tell you about the text?", and "What do you already know about the topic?"

First Reading:

The first reading may be read aloud by the tutor, who should serve as a good model by using expression and tone appropriate for the text. Follow-up the reading with conversation about the difficult or new words, main idea and similar text the student may have read in the past.

Second Reading:

After a brief discussion, prompt the student to read the text orally or silently on his/her own. The student could highlight key concepts and vocabulary during this reading. Support the student with challenging vocabulary as needed.

Reading Response:

Discuss the idea and feelings the text may bring up. Lead the student to make a personal connection. The student may choose to draw, make a list or write a personal response to the text.

Reflecting:

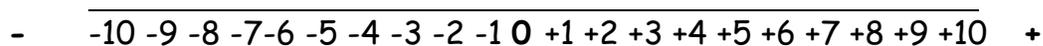
A very important final step is to reflect on the meaning of the text and on the new reading strategies used while reading the text. For example, the student may feel rereading the text helped with understanding the main idea of the piece or word "family" skills helped to decode an unknown word.

Solving Integers

Integers are positive and negative whole numbers. Think of money for all types of questions involving adding or subtracting integers.

To add integers:

Using a number line, move to the right when the integer is positive and to the left when the integer is negative.

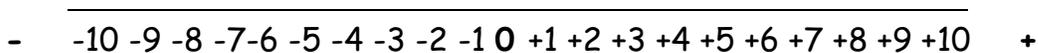


Examples:

- 1) $(+2) + (+4) = +6$ Start at +2 and move 4 spaces to the right.
- 2) $(+3) + (-4) = -1$ Start at +3 and move 4 spaces to the left.

To subtract integers:

Using a number line, move to the left when the integer is negative or when you are subtracting a positive integer. Move to the right if you are subtracting a negative integer (subtracting a negative makes something positive).



Examples:

- 3) $(-5) - (+3) = -8$ Start at -5 and move 3 spaces to the left.
- 4) $(+7) - (-2) = +9$ Start at +7 and move 2 spaces to the right.

An alternative way for students to think about integers on a number line is to think of a centigrade thermometer with the temperature measured in Celsius degrees. A sketch should show zero as the freezing point, positive numbers as being increasingly warmer, and negative numbers as being increasingly colder.

In example 3 above, it started out at -5 degrees, then got colder by 3 degrees. In example 4 above, it started out at +7 degrees, then stopped getting colder (got warmer) by 2 degrees. Double negatives turning positive is always confusing. For example, "I'm not saying 'no' " is a very challenging way to say "I'm saying 'yes' "

Solving Equations Requiring One Operation

Equations are numbers with the same value separated by an equal sign. X is a mystery number. To find out the value of X , you need to get X by itself. There are several types of equations, but the same basic methods are used to solve them all.

If X has a number added, subtracted, multiplied, or divided - you can get this number removed by doing the opposite operation.

If X has a number added:

Example: $X + 6 = 8$

In order for the X to be by itself the 6 has to be removed.

This can be done by subtracting 6 from each side.

$$X + 6 - 6 = 8 - 6 \quad (+ 6 - 6 \text{ equals } 0, \text{ and } X + 0 \text{ is still just } X)$$

$$X = 8 - 6$$

$$X = 2$$

If X has a number subtracted:

Example: $X - 2 = 3$

In order for the X to be by itself the 2 needs to be removed.

This can be done by adding 2 to each side.

$$X - 2 + 2 = 3 + 2 \quad (-2 + 2 \text{ equals } 0, \text{ and } X + 0 \text{ is still just } X)$$

$$X = 5$$

If X is multiplied by a number:

Example: $8X = 40$

In order for the X to be by itself the 8 needs to be removed.

This can be done by dividing each side by 8.

$$\frac{8X}{8} = \frac{40}{8} \quad (8 \text{ divided by } 8 \text{ equals } 1, \text{ and } X \text{ times } 1 \text{ is still just } X)$$

$$X = 5$$

If X is divided by a number:

Example: $\frac{X}{2} = 7$

In order for the X to be by itself the 2 needs to be removed.

This can be done by multiplying each side by 2.

$$\frac{X}{2} \times 2 = 7 \times 2 \quad (\text{if } X \text{ is divided by } 2, \text{ multiplying by } 2 \text{ equals } 1, \text{ and } X \text{ times } 1 \text{ is still just } X)$$

$$X \times 1 = 7 \times 2$$

$$X = 14$$

Solving Equations Requiring Two Operations

The **X** needs to be by itself, so do the opposite of any addition, subtraction, multiplication or division in order to remove the numbers to the other side of the equation. Do the same operation to both sides. Then solve.

Example: $2X - 6 = 8$

Add 6 to each side.

$$2X - 6 + 6 = 8 + 6$$

$$2X + 0 = 14$$

$$2X = 14$$

Divide each side by 2.

$$\frac{2X}{2} = \frac{14}{2}$$

$$X = \frac{14}{2}$$

$$X = 7$$

Example: $X + 2 = 10$

$$4$$

Subtract 2 from each side.

$$X + 2 - 2 = 10 - 2$$

$$4$$

$$X + 0 = 10 - 2$$

$$4$$

$$X = 8$$

$$4$$

Multiply each side by 4.

$$X \times 4 = 8 \times 4$$

$$4$$

$$X = 32$$

Solving Equations Requiring Several Operations

Do all steps needed to get **X** (called the variable) to the left of the equal sign and other numbers (called constants) to the right. If **X**'s are on both sides of the equal sign, remove the **X**'s from the right side by adding or subtracting them until all **X**'s are on the left side of the equal sign and none are on the right. Remove numbers from the left side of the equation, by doing the "opposite operation" method used in previous examples doing one operation with **X**.

Example: $5X - 4 = 3X + 6$

Subtract $3X$ from each side.

$$5X - 3X - 4 = 3X - 3X + 6$$

$$2X - 4 = 0 + 6$$

$$2X - 4 = 6$$

Add 4 to each side.

$$2X - 4 + 4 = 6 + 4$$

$$2X = 10$$

Divide each side by 2.

$$\frac{2X}{2} = \frac{10}{2}$$

$$X = 5$$

Solving Equations that Include Brackets

When an equation contains brackets, multiply everything on the inside of the brackets by the number on the outside of the brackets.

Example: $4(X + 8) = 40$ (This reads 4 times X, then add to that, 4 times 8)

$$4X + 32 = 40$$

Subtract 32 from each side.

$$4X + 32 - 32 = 40 - 32$$

$$4X = 8$$

Divide each side by 4.

$$\frac{4X}{4} = \frac{8}{4}$$

$$X = 2$$

Solving Equations that Include Fractions (or Ratios)

Example: $\frac{X}{3} = \frac{4}{6}$

Multiply each side by 3 (to remove the fraction from X)

$$\frac{X}{3} \times 3 = \frac{4}{6} \times 3$$

$$X = \frac{12}{6}$$

$$X = 2$$

Example: $\frac{4X - 5}{6} = \frac{5}{2}$

Multiply each side by 6 (to remove the fraction from X)

$$\frac{6(4X - 5)}{6} = 6 \times \frac{5}{2}$$

$$4X - 5 = \frac{30}{2}$$

Add 5 to each side.

$$4X - 5 + 5 = 15 + 5$$

$$4X = 20$$

Divide each side by 4.

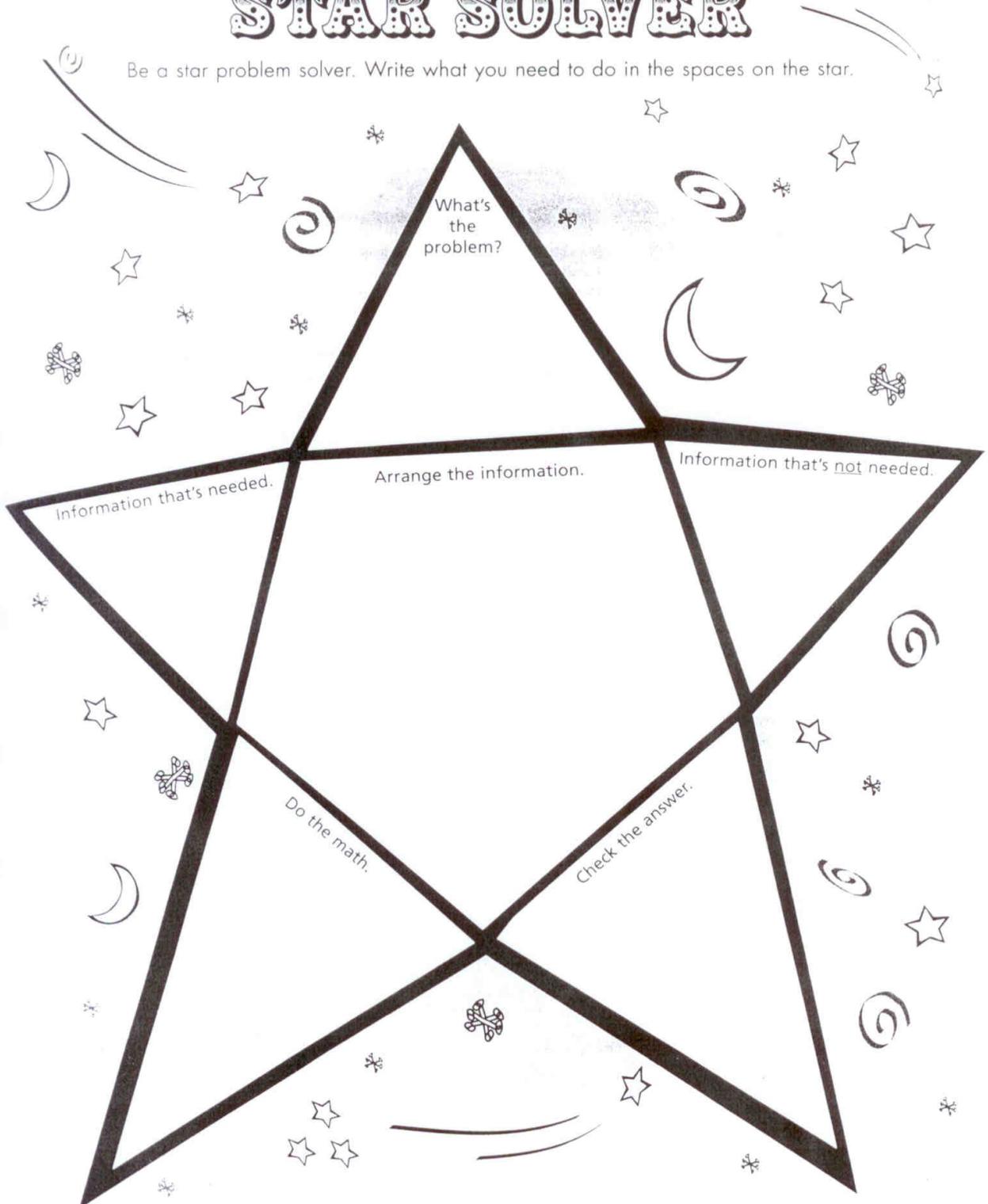
$$\frac{4X}{4} = \frac{20}{4}$$

$$X = 5$$

Name: _____ Date: _____

STAR SOLVER

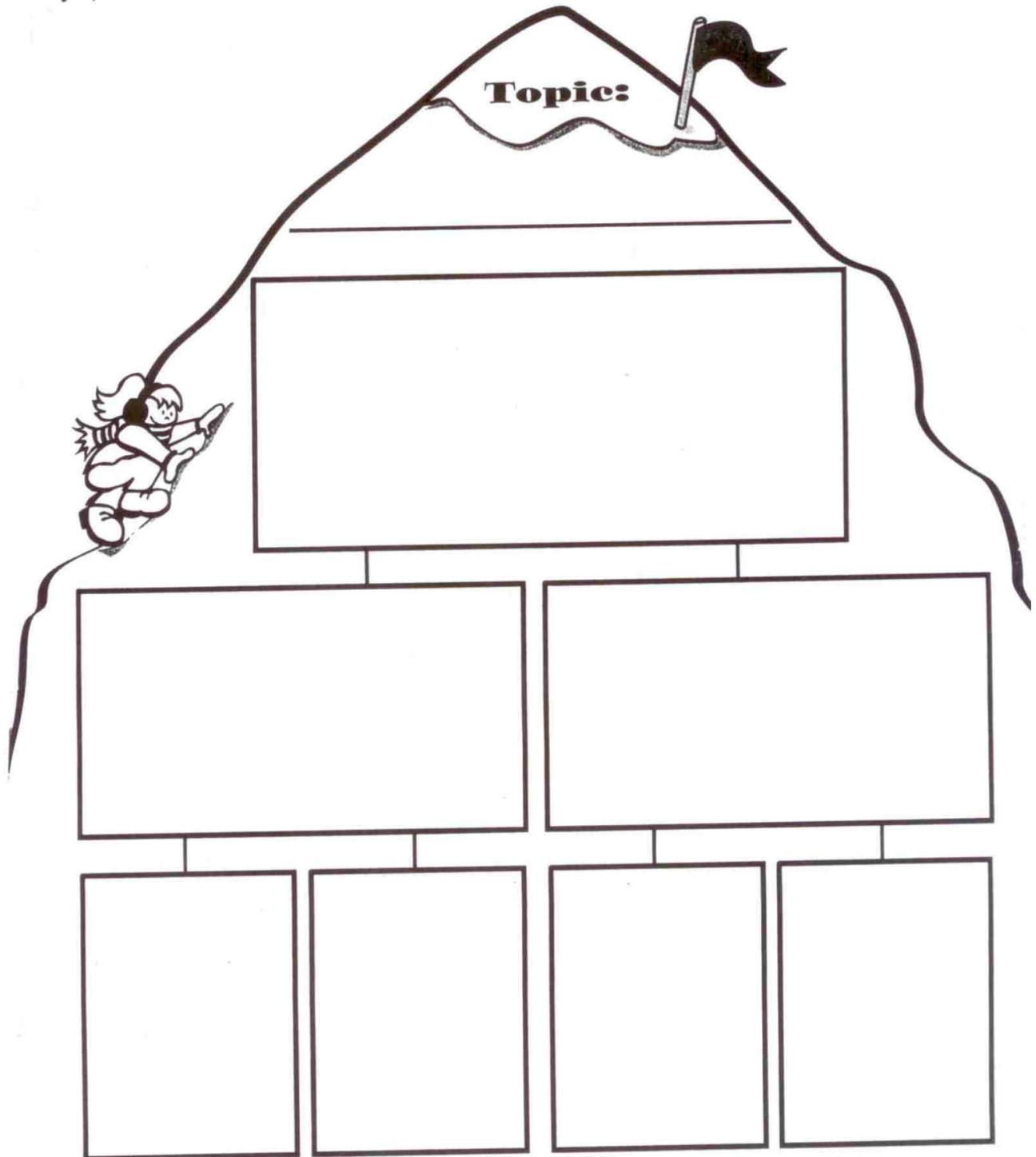
Be a star problem solver. Write what you need to do in the spaces on the star.



Name: _____

Climbing the Mountain

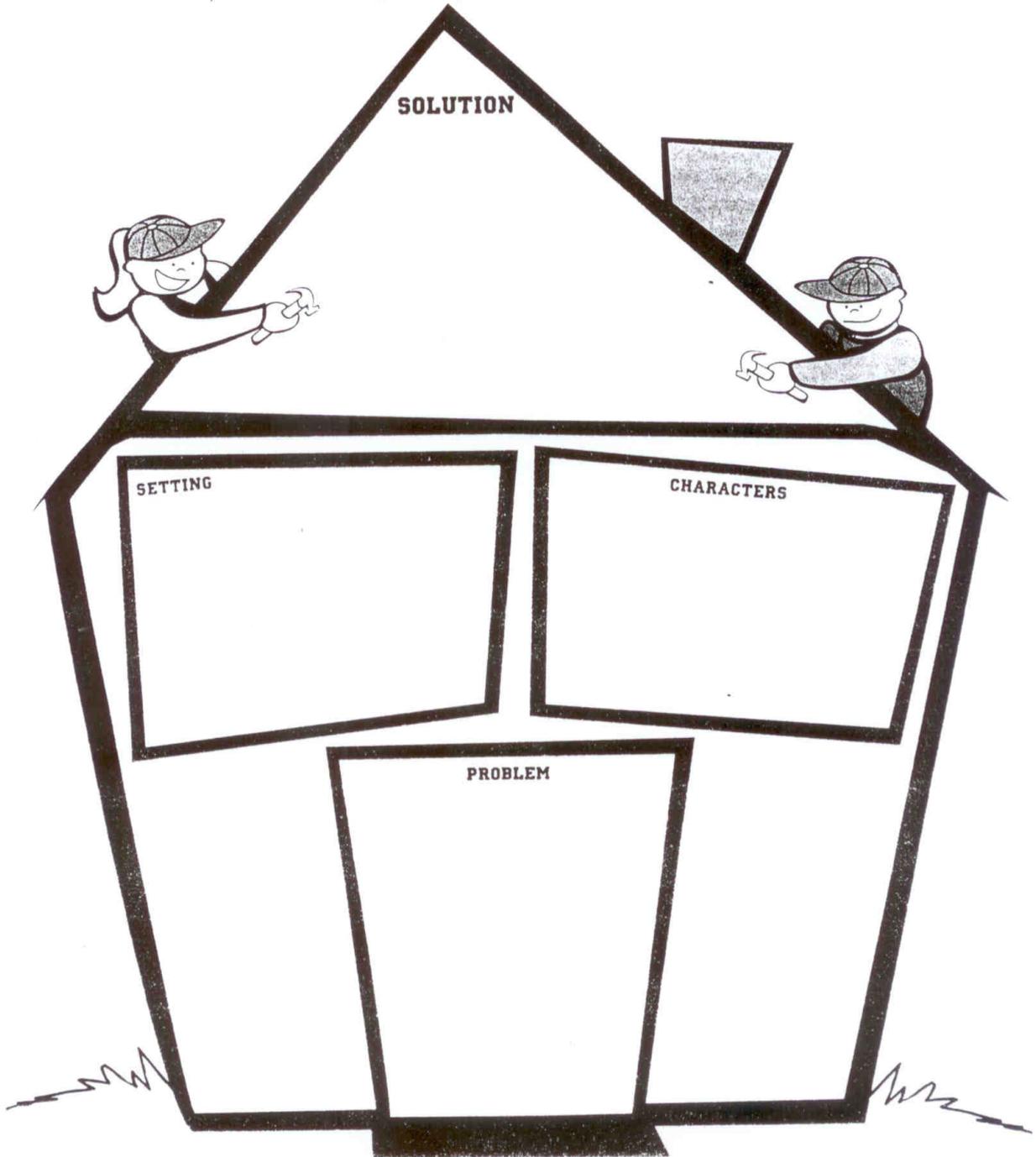
What is the most important group or idea? Write it in the box at the top of the mountain. Divide that group or idea into the other groups or less important ideas and write those in the smaller boxes.



Name: _____ Date: _____

BUILDING A STORY

How do you want to build your story? Write your ideas in the spaces on the house.

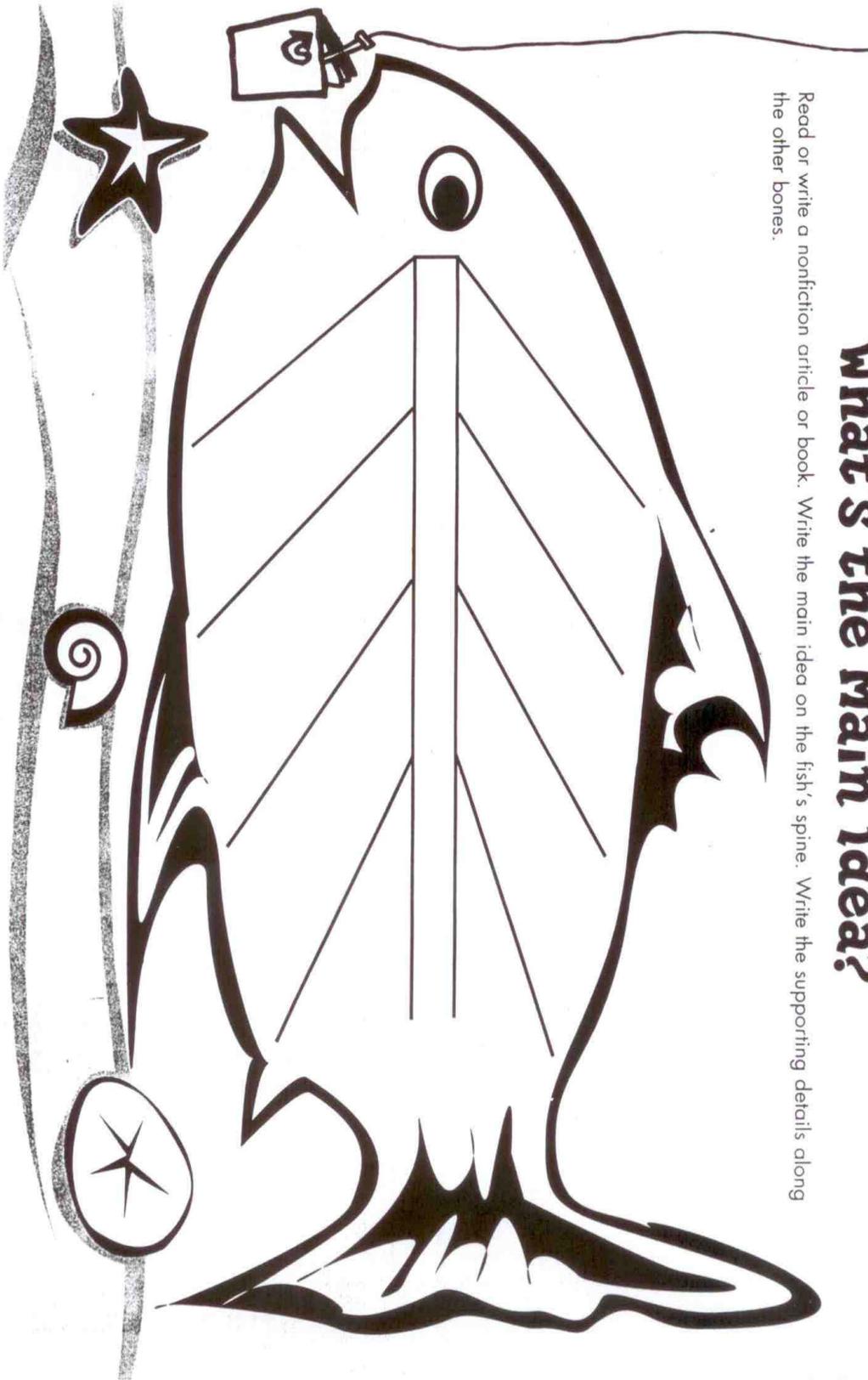


Name: _____

Date: _____

What's the main idea?

Read or write a nonfiction article or book. Write the main idea on the fish's spine. Write the supporting details along the other bones.

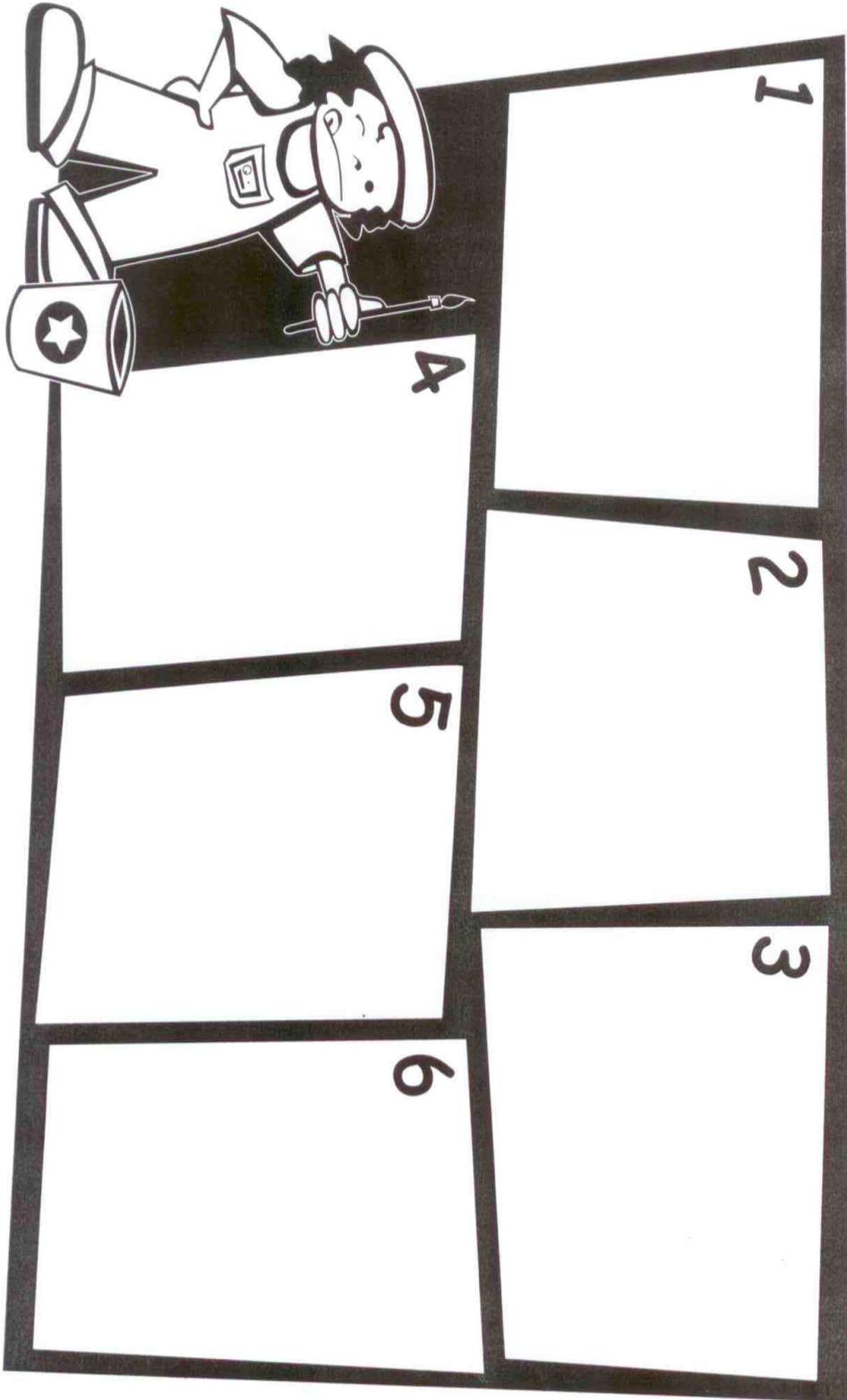


Name: _____ Date: _____

Book Title: _____ Author: _____

STORY BOARD

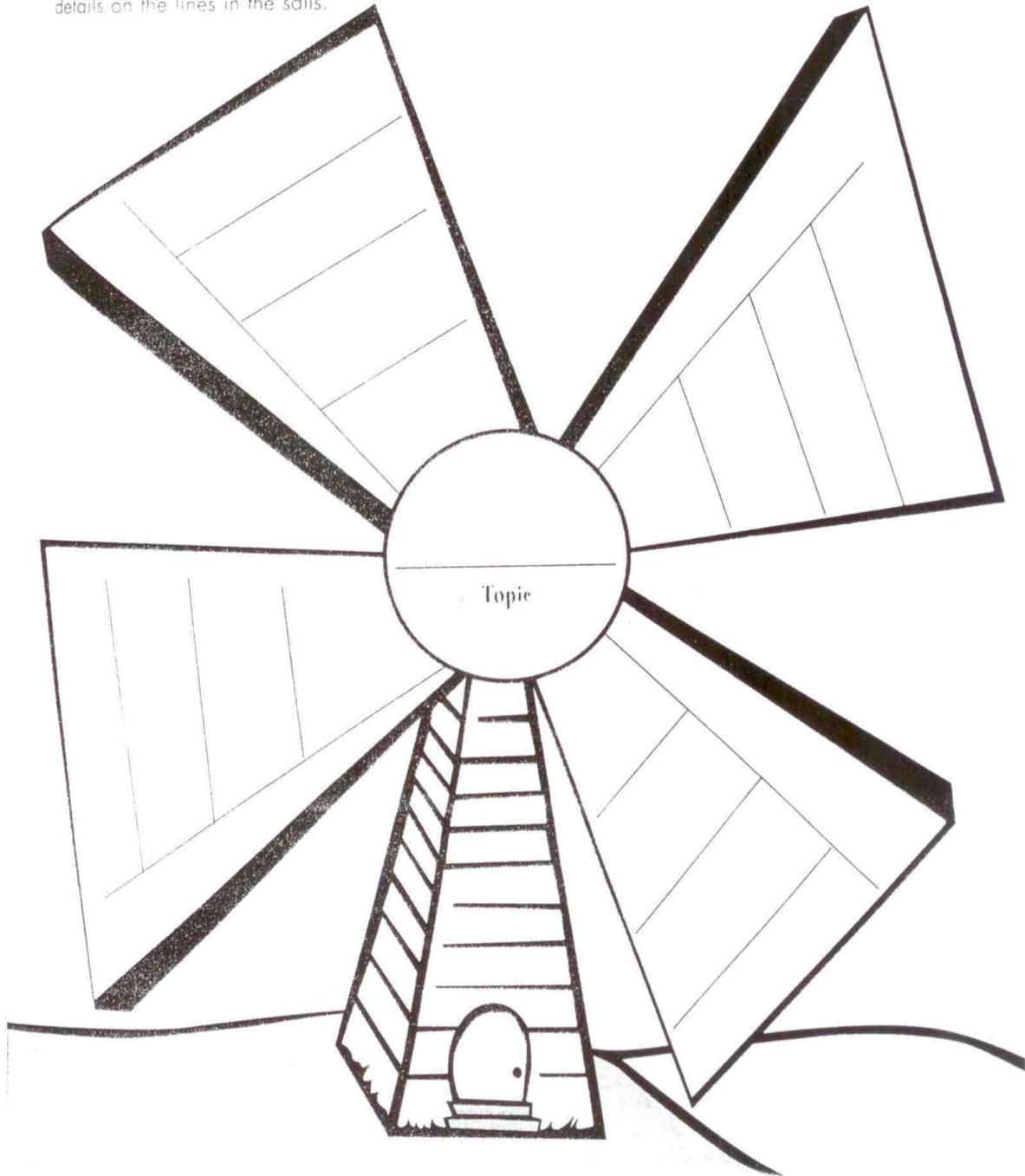
Draw or write the events of the story on the story board. Record them in the correct order.



Name: _____ Date: _____

ORGANIZING POWER

Use the windmill to organize your ideas. Write the topic in the center circle. Write categories and details on the lines in the sails.



Fry's Sight Word List

the	he	go	who
A	I	see	an
is	they	then	their
you	one	us	she
to	good	no	new
and	me	him	said
we	about	by	did
that	had	was	boy
in	if	come	three
not	some	get	down
for	up	or	work
at	her	two	put
with	do	man	were
it	when	little	before
on	so	has	just
can	my	them	long

will	very	how	here
are	all	like	other
of	would	our	old
this	any	what	take
your	been	know	eat
as	out	make	again
but	there	which	give
be	from	much	after
have	day	his	many
saw	big	may	ran
home	where	let	five
soon	am	use	read
stand	ball	these	over
box	morning	right	such
upon	live	present	way
first	four	tell	too
came	last	next	shall

girl	color	please	own
house	away	leave	most
find	red	hand	sure
because	friend	more	thing
made	pretty	why	only
could	eat	better	near
book	want	under	than
look	year	while	open
mother	white	should	kind
run	got	never	must
school	play	each	high
people	found	best	far
night	left	another	both
into	men	seem	end
say	bring	tree	also
think	wish	name	until
back	black	dear	call

ask	hat	off	fire
small	car	sister	ten
yellow	write	happy	order
show	try	once	part
goes	myself	didn't	early
clean	longer	set	fat
buy	those	round	third
thank	hold	dress	same
sleep	full	fall	love
letter	carry	wash	hear
jump	eight	start	yesterday
help	sing	always	eyes
fly	warm	anything	door
don't	sit	around	clothes
fast	dog	close	though
cold	ride	walk	o'clock
today	hot	money	second

does	grow	turn	water
face	cut	might	town
green	seven	hard	took
every	woman	along	pair
brown	funny	bed	now
coat	yes	fine	keep
six	ate	sat	head
gave	stop	hone	food
told	time	word	wear
miss	yet	almost	Mr.
father	true	thought	side
children	above	send	poor
land	still	receive	lost
interest	meet	pay	outside
government	since	nothing	wind
feet	number	need	Mrs.
garden	state	mean	learn

done	matter	late	held
country	line	half	front
different	remember	fight	built
bad	large	enough	family
across	few	feel	began
yard	hit	during	air
winter	cover	gone	young
table	window	hundred	ago
story	even	week	world
sometimes	city	between	airplane
I'm	together	chance	without
tired	sun	being	kill
horse	life	care	ready
something	street	answer	stay
brought	party	course	won't
shoes	suit	against	paper
hour	grade	egg	spell

glad	brother	ground	beautiful
follow	remain	afternoon	sick
company	milk	feed	became
believe	several	boat	cry
begin	war	plan	finish
mind	able	question	catch
pass	charge	fish	floor
reach	either	return	stick
month	less	sir	great
point	train	fell	guess
rest	cost	hill	bridge
sent	evening	wood	church
talk	note	add	lady
went	past	ice	tomorrow
bank	room	chair	snow
ship	flew	watch	whom
business	office	alone	women

whole	cow	low	among
short	visit	arm	road
certain	wait	dinner	farm
hair	teacher	hair	cousin
reason	spring	service	bread
summer	picture	class	wrong
fill	bird	quite	age
become	herself	demand	aunt
body	idea	however	system
chance	drop	figure	lie
act	river	ease	cause
die	smile	increase	marry
real	son	enjoy	possible
speak	bat	rather	supply
already	fact	sound	thousand
doctor	sort	eleven	pen
step	king	music	condition

itself	dark	human	perhaps
nine	themselves	court	produce
baby	whose	force	twelve
minute	study	plant	rode
ring	fear	suppose	uncle
wrote	move	law	labor
happen	stood	husband	public
appear	himself	moment	consider
heart	strong	person	thus
swim	know	result	least
felt	often	continue	power
fourth	toward	price	mark
I'll	wonder	serve	president
kept	twenty	national	voice
wall	important	wife	whether

Specific Diagnoses

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ADD/ADHD

Individuals with Attention Deficit Disorder and Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder typically experience difficulty with attention and learning which can lead to subsequent problems in social skills, self-esteem and behaviour.

Distinctive Features

- Short attention span
- Cannot sit still
- Impulsive
- Blurts out answers and comments
- Constant movement annoys other children
- Picks at other children
- Disorganized
- Poor motor control
- Inconsistent

Challenges

Doesn't seem to listen to instructions

Doesn't complete assigned tasks

Disorganized

Easily Frustrated

Argues

Helpful Interventions

- Make eye contact to gain attention before providing instructions.
- Use brief, simple instructions.
- Give written instructions.
- Ask student to repeat instructions.

- Itemize tasks - make a list.
- Highlight the information.
- Use sticky notes.
- Show student how to get started.

- List steps for task completion.
- Use both verbal and visual directions.

- Listen.
- Teach skills for problem-solving.
- Provide positive feedback.

- Ignore minor disruptions.
- Redirect the students attention towards a positive thought or activity.
- Demonstrate a calm attitude.

Autism Spectrum Disorder

Autism Spectrum Disorder is a neurological disorder. A lifelong, developmental disability, usually evident by age three, ASD typically affects social function, communication, academic performance and response to the environment. There is a very wide range of abilities within this classification.

Distinctive Features

Impairment in social interaction

- unusual eye contact - often looks away when listening or speaking
- failure to develop appropriate peer relationships
- often emotionally detached
- may appear to have hearing loss
- difficulty understanding social rules (personal space)
- sensory sensitivity

Impairment in communication

- difficulty with age-appropriate conversation
- lack of spontaneity
- repetitive or peculiar use of language
- literal interpretation - difficulty with idioms, metaphors and other figures of speech
- may have difficulty understanding written and oral language at some levels

Repetitive behaviour

- may display unusual attachments to objects or parts of objects
- inflexible routines or rituals
- hand/finger flapping or whole body spinning when agitated
- may be bothered by certain clothing materials
- noises may seem amplified
- may be distracted by the flicker and hum of fluorescent lights

Challenges

- Weak comprehension during
- Preview
 - Active reading
 - Retelling

Helpful Interventions

- Highlight key words.
- Focus on sequencing.
- Teach vocabulary.
- Review frequently.

One-way conversation	Focus on student's interest. Practice scripts of relevant responses. Provide cues to stay on topic, for example, "We'll talk about that later."
Poor listening skills	Be brief - give only pertinent information. Give short, concise directions. Provide a model or example.
Difficulty writing - fine motor - Shaky/awkward pencil grip - Poor spacing between words or lines	Use commercial pencil grips. Teach student to use pinky finger to space between words. Try using paper with raised lines. Use a green dot to show beginning.
Difficulty forming letters	Have student trace letters - chalkboard, sand, crayons - keep in mind that these materials may cause sensory issues. Provide an alphabet for reference.
Problems with writing tasks	Give a specific topic. Ask specific closed-end questions. Help student find the main idea. Separate relevant details. Use a fact journal. Demonstrate story organization - specify the sequence of events. Use a template to fill in information. Use graphic organizers.
Problems with organization	Use visual patterns - lists, schedules. Use graphic organizers. Use graph paper to align math. Tell student the amount of work expected and what is going to happen next.

Dyscalculia

Dyscalculia is a neurological disorder which affects a person's ability to learn and solve mathematical problems.

Distinctive Features

- Lack of basic math skills/number sense
- Needs manipulatives when other students no longer need them
- Difficulty with abstractions
- Inability to recognize patterns
- Avoids mathematics or works very slowly

Challenges

Difficulty understanding math symbols and terms

Difficulty with basic operations

Difficulty maintaining focus

Difficulty solving multi-step problems

Losing place on worksheets

Helpful Interventions

Use diagrams and charts.
Provide or make a dictionary of math terms.
Review basics.

Discuss relationships between operations.
Use manipulatives (examples that the student can see, touch, and move to assist understanding).

Break tasks into smaller parts.
Work in an area free of distractions.
Take frequent breaks - gradually lengthen time on task.

Highlight key words.
Guide student to determine what is being asked.
Underline the question.
Eliminate unimportant information.

Use graph paper to keep columns aligned.
Use different colored pencils to write each step.

Dysgraphia

Dysgraphia is a neurological problem which can affect the whole writing process including organization, composition, spelling, punctuation, capitalization and handwriting.

Distinctive Features

- Poor organization of written work
- Too fast or too slow copying notes
- Does writing which is very difficult to read
- Writes a mixture of upper/lower case or cursive/printed letters
- Requires excessive effort to produce a written product

Challenges

Awkward pencil grip

Poor motor memory (inability to remember how to form letters or numerals)

Spells correctly only on tests with no carryover to daily work

No clear beginning, middle, end in written composition

Poor organization of work on page

Helpful Interventions

Provide commercial pencil grip.

Supply alphabet charts which show directions for proper letter formation.
Teach cursive writing - the letters flow into each other.
Teach keyboarding.

Allow use of dictionary or electronic spell check.
Keep a personal spelling journal.
Provide word banks.
Memorize a few sight words at a time - practice often.
Make a game of learning new words - see Spelling section in Reading Difficulties (page 44)

Use graphic organizers (pages 19-24).
Explain that there must be a beginning, middle and end to each piece of writing.
Teach sequencing (page 10).
Edit only for content.

Use page templates outlining margins.
Fold paper into horizontal sections and use only one section at a time.

Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a genetic language processing disorder and is characterized by a broad spectrum of problems which effect trying to communicate in writing or to understand something written.

Distinctive Features

- Poor sound symbol association; difficulty with rhyme
- Poor sequencing of letters, numbers, events
- Lack of fluency in oral reading
- Poor reading comprehension
- Difficulty with directions (left, right, up, down, etc.)
- Poor copying skills
- Writing is difficult for others to read or understand.
- Slow to complete or copy written assignments

Challenges

Inverting/reversing/scrambling letters, numerals, and/or symbols

Oral reading fluency

Spelling

Writing

Organization

Helpful Interventions

- Trace form with finger, chalk, or marker
- Copy form using a model.
- Reproduce form without a model.

- Preview text - highlight key words; scan for unfamiliar words.
- Practice one sentence at a time; read like talking.

- Use a dictionary or an electronic speller.
- Use a personal spelling journal.
- Make word banks.
- See Spelling section of Reading Difficulties.

- Give verbal cues for letter formation.
- Use proofreading checklist.
- Use graphic organizers.
- Brainstorm.
- Introduce Fact Journals.

- Use visual organizers.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder can be the result of maternal consumption of alcohol and/or other substances during pregnancy. Although there are several common characteristics such as low birth weight, some physical abnormalities and language/behaviour disorders, each child is affected differently.

Distinctive Features

Willful behaviour

Impulsive / poor judgement

Difficulty with transitions - moving from one activity to another

Difficulty with problem-solving

Delayed or impaired language

Challenges

Difficulty following directions
(able to repeat instructions but
unable to follow through)

Short attention span (over-
stimulated; can't remember)

Ineffective short-term memory

Poor judgement / easily led

Lack of organization

Helpful Interventions

Be very specific - give one direction
at a time.

Provide visual supports or check lists
of what to do.

Work in a cubicle.

Have in sight only necessary materials for
task at hand.

Use visual cues - lists, highlighters.

Use visual cues.

Use memory strategies (page 7).

Use social stories.

Use visual cues - lists, schedules.

Make use of graphic organizers
(pages 19 - 24)

Use graph paper to align math.

Nonverbal Learning Disorder

Nonverbal learning disorder is a neurological condition which can result in three major categories of dysfunction:

- Motor
- Visual / spatial / organizational
- Social / communication

Distinctive Features

- Lack of motor control
 - Gross motor - seems clumsy, not good at sports
 - Fine motor - difficulty tying shoes, awkward pencil/scissor grip
- Difficulty remembering shapes of letters/sequencing
- Poor visual-spatial perceptions - difficulty with puzzles, following directions
- Poor organizational skills - difficulty writing responses on a sheet of paper
- Interprets literally - difficulty with body language, facial expressions, changes in tones of voice; naively trusting

Challenges

Slow to complete reading tasks because of visual /spatial difficulties

Cannot 'read between the lines' to interpret social situations

Difficulty with the process of writing - actual handwriting very difficult

Poor organization of written assignments

Visual-spatial problems (misaligning numbers in columns; crowding numbers and words)

Helpful Interventions

Keep reading time brief.

Ask open-ended questions, for example, "Why did they do that?"

Break down written assignments into small components and give one direction at a time.
Create a written outline.
Use assistive technology.

Spend five minutes at beginning of study time organizing notes.
Present steps one at a time.
Help student prioritize assignments.
Use appropriate assistive technology.

Use graph paper to align numbers.
Use consumable text - photocopies.
Explain each step.

Processing Disorders

Auditory and Language Processing Disorders result in an inability to receive and integrate the information that's heard. People with these disorders can have normal intelligence and hearing acuity while also experiencing deficits in reading, spelling and other areas of learning.

Distinctive Features

- Failure to follow instructions
- Frequent daydreaming
- Often talks without making sense
- Difficulty understanding words used outside their usual literal meaning, difficulty responding to humour, irony, and puns
- Impulsive responses - jumps to conclusions
- Frequently asks for repetition of questions

Challenges

Often uses too general category labels such as 'thing' or 'stuff'

Ineffective short-term memory; is forgetful in a two-step direction

Poor sequencing - trouble learning things in order like days of the week, address, or number

Difficulty hearing amid background noises

Often requests repetition

Helpful Interventions

Facilitate retrieval of stored information by giving cues, prompts or hints.

Provide visual cues.

Allow thinking time.

Use memory strategies such as "repeat, rephrase, picture it."

Use mnemonics. Example: for days of the week Sun/Mon/Tue/Wed/Thu/Fri/Sat ask student to remember "See Mom Take Water To Feed Sam."

Reduce background noise.

Work in a cubicle.

Gain student's attention before giving direction.

Include only pertinent material.

Restate, paraphrase often.

Reading Difficulties

Reading with understanding requires the combination of several skills including but not limited to: word attack skills/decoding, sight vocabulary/spelling, sequencing, fluency, and comprehension. Many students have difficulty with some or all of these skills.

Distinctive Features

- Doesn't understand that the purpose of reading is to gain meaning from text
- Reads only when required - avoids reading whenever possible
- Displays nervous behaviours when reading - constant movement, kicking the leg of the table, or foot tapping
- Difficulty reading at a speaking speed, not fluent
- Difficulty reading out loud
- Frequent omissions, substitutions, insertions
- Inability to retrieve previously known words

Challenges

Weak word attack skills/decoding

Helpful Interventions

Look for word family associations - at, am, ink.
Write down a word from a known word family - then write the unknown word under it. Examples:

pink

drink

think

Poor sight vocabulary/spelling

Use sight word lists.
Practice spelling a few words each day - build on the student's existing vocabulary.

Poor sequencing

Ask the student to retell what was read.
List or highlight key words.
Ask the student to recount the events in order from the beginning.

Difficulty reading at a speaking speed

Model reading first - as in tutor training.
Read aloud along with the student.
Move your finger above the words faster than the student reads and tell the student to keep pace.
Say "Read like you are talking to someone."

Weak comprehension of written words

Limit reading to short periods of time - 10 minutes.

Use the *Guided Reading techniques* (page 14).

Model reading first - then re-read with student.

Question often during re-reading. Example: "Did that make sense?"

Ask the student to make up questions about what was read.

Discuss any clues you might be able to get before actually reading the story - pictures, title, characters.

Tourette's Syndrome

Tourette's syndrome is a neurological disorder which is characterized by repetitive involuntary movements and vocalizations called tics. The onset of these tics is before age eighteen; they occur frequently and can cause social and emotional problems and difficulty in academic and occupational functioning.

Distinctive Features

- Involuntary motor tics which occur frequently
- Poor impulse control
- Vocal tics - throat clearing, coughing, tongue clicking
- Reduced attention span
- Language processing deficits

Challenges

Short attention span -
difficulty concentrating

Motor / vocal tics -
eye blinks, facial grimaces,
throat clearing, tongue clicks

Language processing deficits

High anxiety

Disorganization

Helpful Interventions

- Make eye contact.
- Use brief, simple instructions.
- Give written instructions.
- Ask student to repeat directions.

Ignore these - he/she is not doing them on purpose; they are involuntary.

- Facilitate retrieval of stored information by giving cues, prompts or hints.
- Provide visual cues.
- Allow thinking time.

- Focus on student's interests by asking what he/she likes to do in his/her spare time or what he/she likes to watch on TV or read.
- Be friendly and patient.

- Use visuals - lists, schedules.
- Use graphic organizers.