

Supporting Learning Differences in Manufacturing

Employee Toolkit



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Supporting Learning Styles in Canadian manufacturing



1.1 Welcome to the Toolkit

In manufacturing, work moves fast—there are machines to run, safety rules to follow, and new things to learn. Whether you're just starting out or have years of experience, it can feel like there's a lot to keep track of.

Everyone learns and works in different ways. This Learning Support Toolkit offers simple, practical tools—like checklists, visual guides, and conversation tips—to help you stay organized, focused, and confident on the job.

Disclaimer: This toolkit gives general tips and ideas. It is not legal advice. Every workplace is different. Rules, policies, and laws may vary by employer and province. If you need legal guidance you can talk to your HR department, your union, or your local human rights office.

Everyone Deserves Support

You don't need to prove anything to say that part of your job is difficult. If something at work feels harder than it should, it's okay to ask for support. Something simple could help.

Everyone learns differently. That's not a weakness—it's part of what makes teams stronger.

You Don't Have to Figure It Out Alone

You're not alone if work feels overwhelming sometimes. And you don't have to "tough it out" on your own. Help is available—and this toolkit is here to support you.

It can help you:

- Understand how you learn best
- Try tools or strategies that make work easier
- Learn how to ask for support—if and when it feels right for you

When to Use This Toolkit

Use this toolkit any time you want work to feel more manageable:

- During training or onboarding
- When learning new equipment or safety procedures
- When things feel confusing, stressful, or unclear
- When you're ready to try a new approach

You don't need to use everything—just use the parts of the toolkit that make sense to support you. This toolkit is here to help you succeed in your role and grow in your career.



1.2 Your Rights at Work

Introduction

You have the right to do your best work – and to get the support you need to make that happen.

Sometimes, things like written instructions, fast-paced tasks, or noisy environments can make work harder. If you learn or work differently, you may need tools or changes to help you succeed. That's not asking for special treatment – it's about making sure you can do your best work.

You Have the Right to Be Treated Fairly

In Canada, **you have the right to fair and respectful treatment at work.** That includes:

- The right to feel safe
- The right to be included
- The right to get support if you need it

If parts of your job are harder because of the way you take in, understand, or use information, you can ask for support.

- If you have a documented disability – for example a learning disability - your employer may be required by law to make changes so you can do your job.
- If you do not have a documented disability, your employer may still choose to help, but they are not legally required to provide support.

This toolkit is here to help you understand your rights and feel confident in using them

What the Law Says

Canadian human rights law protects your right to succeed at work if you face challenges because of a documented disability. Employers may be required to make changes – called **accommodations** – to help remove barriers so you can do your job.

An accommodation could be:

- Breaking a task into smaller steps
- Using checklists or visual instructions
- Getting more time to learn something
- Having training done hands-on instead of only in writing
- Using tools like text-to-speech or timers

You can ask for accommodations if it will help you do your job. Your employer does not need to know your exact medical diagnoses or details about your treatment. What they usually need to know is:

- That you have a disability or condition that affects your work
- What specific parts of the job are harder for you
- What changes or supports would make the job easier

Sometimes you can explain this yourself. Other times, you may need a health care provider to help answer these questions. Having medical information available can sometimes help your employer make a decision about accommodation options,

You might say:

“This part of the job is hard for me. Here’s what I think would help”

Limits to Accommodation

Employers must provide support unless it causes serious problems for the business – this is called undue hardship. For example, if a change is very expensive, unsafe, or not possible, they may not have to make it.

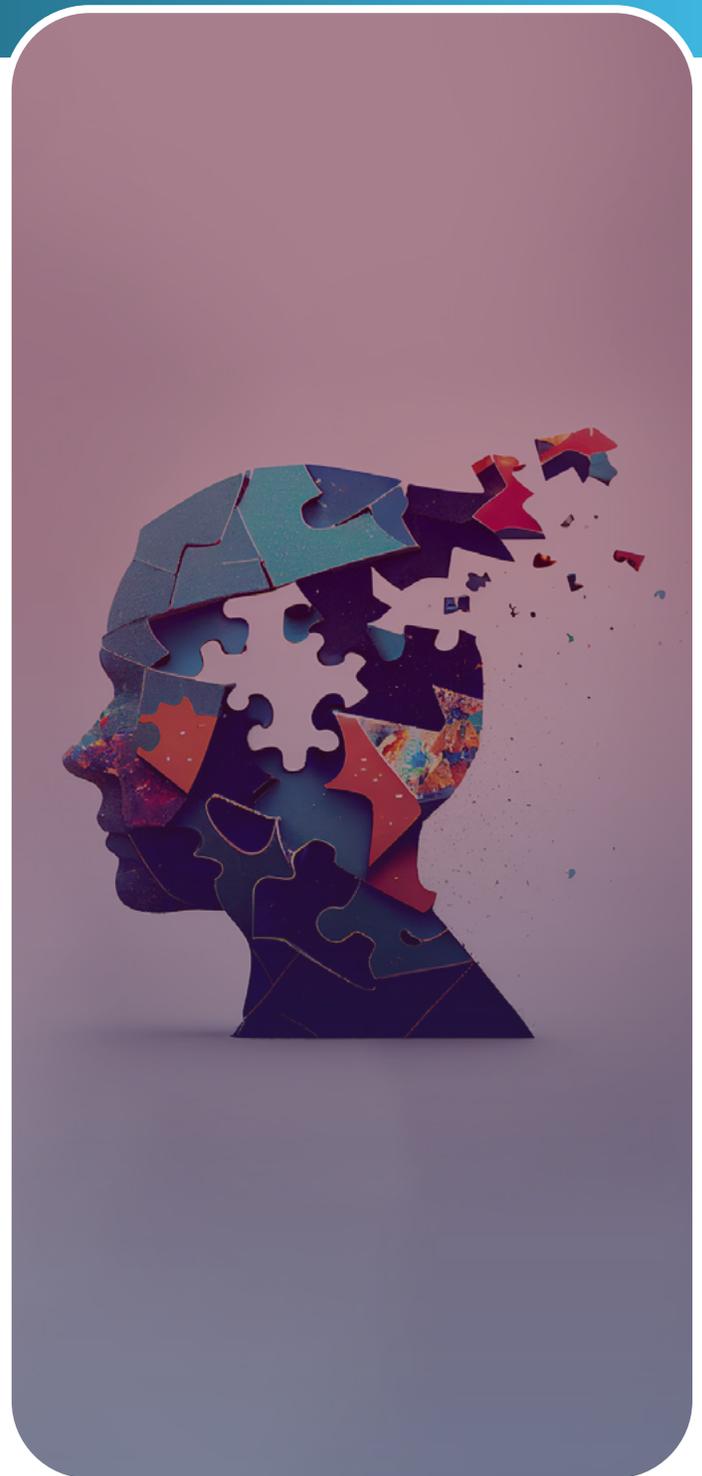
Sometimes a job has tasks that are essential and can’t be changed. This is called a Bona Fide Occupational Requirement. For example, if lifting heavy objects is a necessary part of the job and there is no safe way to offer accommodations, the employer does not have to remove that task.

Removing Barriers Is the Goal

The law encourages employers to create a workplace where everyone can succeed, but this does not mean they will always be able – or required – to make changes.

Removing barriers can include:

- Making training and instructions more accessible
- Offering support without needing a formal/ documented disability
- Being open to different ways of learning



Employers are not required to make changes if the need is not connected to a legally protected characteristic or if it would cause undue hardship. Some employers may still decide to offer accommodations to help employees succeed.

Your Privacy Is Protected

If you share something personal about what support you need, your supervisor or HR must keep it private. They can only share it with others if it's necessary to arrange the support—and only with your permission.

You Are Protected from Discrimination

No one at work can legally treat you unfairly because of a learning difference or because you asked for support. If you feel that's happening, talk to:

- Your HR team
- A union representative (if you have one)
- A trusted co-worker or support person
- Your provincial or territorial human rights office

Further Reading: Learn More About Your Rights

Want to explore more about your rights and support at work? These trusted Canadian resources can help you understand the laws, your options, and where to go if you need help.

1. Canadian Human Rights Act

Explains your right to fair treatment and support at work, including the duty to accommodate.

Link: <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/h-6>

2. Employment Equity Act

Promotes equal opportunities for people with disabilities and other equity groups in federally regulated workplaces.

Link: <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/E-5.401>

3. Canada Human Rights Commission: Workplace Accommodation – A guide for federally regulated employers – Explains employer's legal duty to accommodate, step-by-step guidance, and best practices and examples.

Link: <https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/resources/publications/workplace-accommodation-guide#fn2>

1.3 What Are Learning Differences?

People learn, think, and work in different ways. Some remember best by hearing, others by seeing or doing. Some people like to follow a checklist; others prefer to talk through a task step-by-step. Some need quiet to focus, while others think best when they're moving.

These are called **learning differences**.

Learning differences affect how people take in, understand, and remember information—but they don't affect intelligence, potential, or work ethic.

You Might Have a Learning Difference If You:

- Take longer to read, write, or understand written instructions
- Need to see a task demonstrated, not just explained
- Find it hard to focus in noisy or busy places
- Forget steps unless they're written down
- Get overwhelmed when too much information comes at once
- Avoid asking questions out of concern for appearing unqualified

These experiences are more common than you might think. They don't mean something is wrong. They mean you might benefit from learning or working in a way that fits you—and that's okay.

Learning Differences in Manufacturing

In manufacturing, learning differences are often an asset. Many people with learning differences are strong in areas like:

- **Hands-on work** — building, assembling, operating equipment
- **Problem-solving** — finding creative or practical fixes
- **Attention to detail** — noticing things others might miss
- **Step-by-step thinking** — breaking down tasks and processes

If a process, form, or instruction doesn't work for you, you can ask for it in a different way—like a checklist, a visual guide, or extra time to practice. That's not a special request—it's a smart way to help you do your best work.





Knowing Your Strengths and Needs

2.1 Recognizing Your Strengths

Sometimes it's hard to see your own strengths—especially if you've had challenges at work or school. But many workers have skills that don't always show up on paper. Maybe you're the one people turn to when something breaks, or the first to notice when something's not right.

Before you start thinking about what you need at work, take a minute to think about what you're already good at.

Here are two short stories about workers with different learning styles. See if any parts of their stories feel familiar to you.

Real Work Stories: Everyone Has Strengths

Jason – Learns by Watching and Doing

Jason works in a food processing plant. He finds written instructions hard to follow. But when someone shows him how to do a task, he learns it fast.

Jason's supervisor started showing him each step while he practiced it. Now Jason is one of the fastest at learning new equipment and often helps new coworkers.

Jason's strengths:

- Learning by doing
- Working with his hands
- Helping others learn

Amina – Great at Noticing Problems Early

Amina works in an auto parts warehouse. Paperwork and computers are hard for her. But she's great at spotting small problems others miss.

One day she caught a mistake before parts were shipped out. She now does final checks and uses a paper checklist that works better for her.

Amina's strengths:

- Noticing small details
- Catching mistakes early
- Focusing on safety

What Are Your Strengths?

You may not think of your everyday skills as “strengths,” but they are. Strengths are what you do well—things that come naturally or that others rely on you for.



Check off any that sound like you.

Learning and Doing

- I learn better by watching or doing
- I remember how to do physical tasks
- I pick up hands-on work quickly
- I figure out how machines or tools work

Problem-Solving

- I notice when something is off
- I come up with safer or faster ways to do tasks
- I stay calm when plans change
- I can fix things without needing help

Working with Others

- I'm a reliable team member
- I help new coworkers learn
- I listen well in training
- I stay positive and respectful

Staying Organized and Safe

- I keep my work area clean and ready
- I spot safety risks early
- I follow steps or routines well
- I show up on time and prepared

What Do People Thank You For?

Think about what coworkers or supervisors say to you:

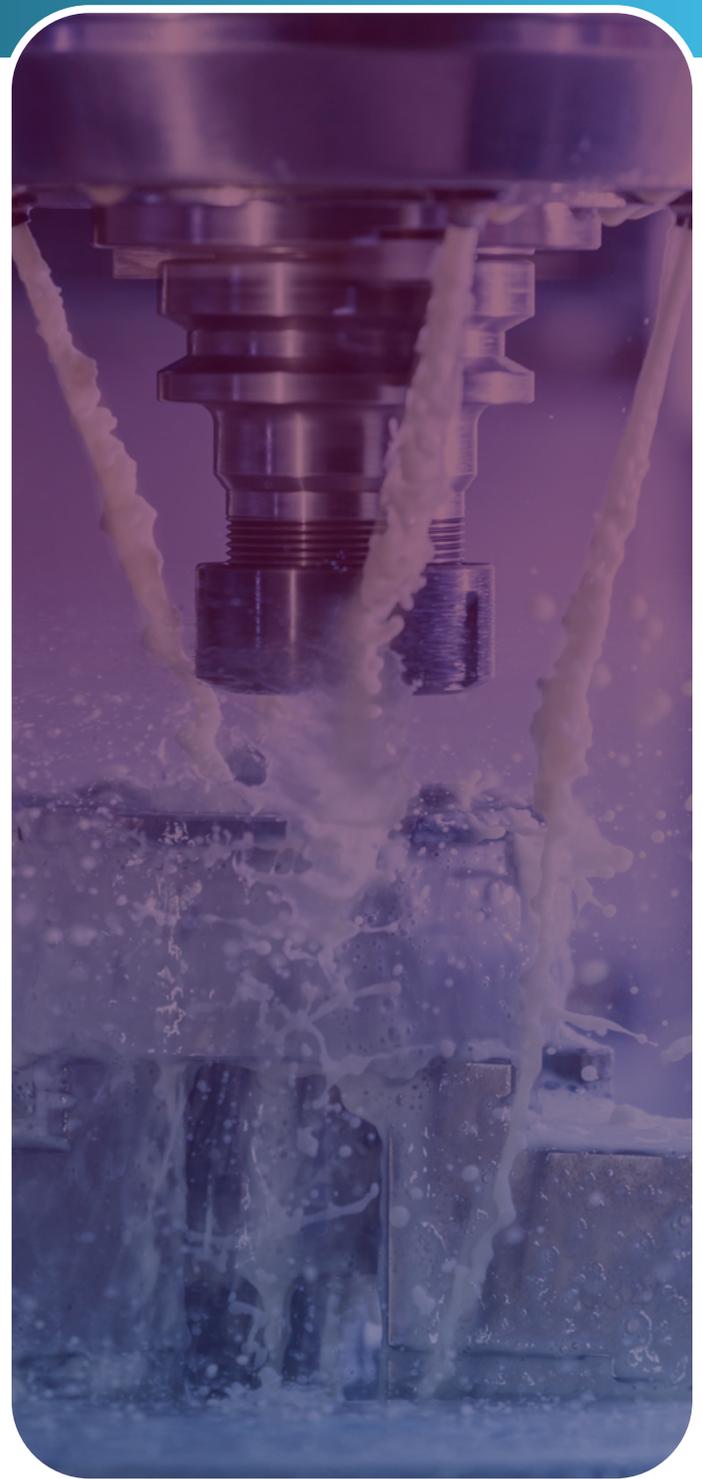
- “Thanks for helping out.”
- “You’re really good at this.”
- “You always catch that problem.”

These are signs of your strengths—even if you didn’t notice them at first.

You Don’t Have to Be Good at Everything

No one is good at every part of the job. This section is about noticing what you’re already good at—so you can feel more confident and build from there.

In the next part, we’ll talk about what makes work harder, and how to think about small changes or support that could help.



2.2 What Makes Work Harder?

Everyone Has Challenges—What Are Yours?

Every job has easy parts and hard parts. Sometimes, the hard parts aren't about the task itself—they're about how the task is explained, taught, or organized.

Some jobs are harder when:

- Instructions are confusing
- You feel rushed
- The environment is loud or distracting
- You don't get time to practice
- No one asks how you learn best

This section will help you think about what gets in the way of doing your best work. Knowing what's hard for you can help you speak up or ask for small changes.

Think About Your Workday

Check off anything that sounds familiar.

- I have trouble remembering long instructions
- I get overwhelmed when I'm given too much information at once
- I find written instructions hard to follow
- I learn better when someone shows me what to do
- I lose focus in noisy or busy areas
- I need extra time to learn a new task
- I forget steps unless I use a checklist or reminder
- I feel nervous asking questions or asking for help
- I make more mistakes when I feel rushed
- I struggle with paperwork, forms, or reports



Why This Matters

Marking these challenges is not about pointing out what's "wrong." It's about **understanding what makes work harder—so you can figure out what would make it easier.**

In many cases, small changes can make a big difference. Things like:

- Getting instructions one step at a time
- Having more hands-on training
- Using checklists or simple visuals
- Getting a bit more time to practice

Everyone Has Something They Struggle With

Some people struggle with reading. Others struggle with staying organized or remembering instructions. These challenges don't mean you can't do the job. They just mean you might need to do it a **different way.**

Knowing what's hard for you is the first step in getting the support you need—if and when you're ready to ask for it.





Supports and Accommodations

3.1 What Is a Workplace Accommodation?

Workplace Accommodations Help You Do Your Job Well

A **workplace accommodation** is a change or support that helps you do your job more easily, safely, or successfully. It doesn't lower expectations or change the job completely—it just helps remove things that make it harder for you to do your bestwork.

Accommodations may be informal or formal. Sometimes a supervisor makes a quick change on the spot. Other times, you and your manager or HR might create a plan together.

Formal Vs. Informal Accommodations

- Formal accommodations are changes your employer may be legally required to make if you have a documented disability that affects your work. This usually requires medical or professional documentation explaining your needs
- Informal Accommodations are small changes your employer might choose to make even without documentation. These can be quick fixes or low-cost adjustments that make your job easier but aren't required by law.

In Canada, only have to make changes if the accommodation is connected to something protected under human rights law. For learning challenges, this is usually a diagnosed learning disability or similar condition. Without a diagnosis, your employer is not required to make changes, but they may still offer informal supports.

Examples of Workplace Accommodations

Accommodations can be simple and low-cost. They depend on your job and what works for you. Here are a few examples used in manufacturing:

How You Learn or Get Instructions

- Getting step-by-step instructions instead of all at once
- Watching a demo instead of just reading a manual
- Using pictures or checklists and text
- Having more time to practice a task

The Work Environment

- Moving to a quieter space to focus on training
- Taking short breaks to reset or reduce stress
- Doing paperwork at a less busy time of day

Requesting Supports

Anyone can ask for supports at work. If something at work is hard for you and there's a simple way to make it easier, You can say something like:

"I learn better when I see it done first. Could someone show me before I try it?"

"I sometimes lose focus when it's busy—can I take five minutes to reset after break?"

"A checklist would help me remember the steps—can I make one for this task?"

Accommodations Help Everyone

Many supports that help people with learning differences also help coworkers and improve safety and processes. When you ask for an accommodation, you're not asking for special treatment—you're asking for the tools to do your job well.

Coming Next:

The next document will show you sample strategies that match different learning styles—so you can start thinking about what might help you most.

3.2 Reflection Worksheet - How I Learn Best



People learn in different ways. Some remember what they see, others what they hear, and some need to do it themselves. You might also need certain tools, time, or structure to stay focused and organized. Use this worksheet to find your best way of learning at work.

What Helps You Understand Instructions?

Put a checkmark in all the boxes that sound like you. The column with the most checkmarks might be your strongest learning style.

	Visual Learner (See it)	Auditory/Verbal Learner (Hear or talk through it)	Kinesthetic/ Hands-On Learner (Try it yourself)	Reading/Writing Learner (Organized & step-by-step)
I learn best when...	I see someone do it	I hear someone explain it	I try it myself	I like seeing written steps
	I like pictures or diagrams	I repeat things out loud	I learn by doing, not watching	I follow routines/ checklists
	I like seeing written steps	I ask questions to understand	I practice until I get it right	I need time to think or go over things again
	I understand charts or colours	I talk through tasks with others	I figure things out with my hands	I use notes, timers, or reminders

Think About This:

1. What's one time you learned something quickly at work?
What helped you learn it?
2. What's one time something was hard to learn?
What made it difficult?

What Might Work for You

Did you have more checked boxes in any one of the columns above?

You might be:

- Mostly a **visual learner** if watching someone, reading or seeing pictures helps you understand.
- Mostly a **verbal learner** if hearing or talking helps most.
- Mostly a **hands-on learner** if you learn by doing.
- Mostly a **reading/writing learner** if you learn using written documents and notes.

You might be a mix of more than one—and that's okay! The goal is to figure out what helps you learn and do your best work.



3.3 Strategies that Support Different Learning Styles

Everyone learns differently.

There's no one "right way" to learn. The important thing is to figure out what works for you—and to know that it's okay to ask for support.

Here are some simple, real-life strategies that can help you in a manufacturing workplace, based on how you learn best.

If You Learn Better by Seeing:

- Ask to see a demo of how to do a task
- Use charts, diagrams, or photos to remember steps
- Watch a coworker do the task before trying it yourself
- Use colour-coding to keep things organized

If You Learn Better by Hearing:

- Ask someone to explain it out loud
- Repeat the steps back to make sure you understand
- Use audio recordings or voice memos
- Pair up with someone who can talk you through the task

If You Learn Better by Doing:

- Ask to try the task while someone watches
- Use trial and error to learn how equipment works
- Get hands-on time before being tested or evaluated
- Practice the task with a trainer or buddy before doing it alone

If You Need More Time or Less Pressure:

- Take a little extra time to learn new tasks
- Ask for step-by-step instructions instead of all at once
- Break big tasks into smaller pieces
- Take short breaks to reset and refocus

If You Need Help Staying Organized or Focused:

- Use checklists to track steps
- Set timers or alarms to stay on schedule
- Use sticky notes or labels to remember things
- Do paperwork at quieter times when it's easier to focus

You Can Mix and Match

You might learn best with a mix of these styles—and that's okay! The point is to figure out which tools, strategies, or supports help you do your best work.

If you find one that works, keep using it. If something's not working, it's okay to try something else.



3.4 Tools That Help at Work

Sometimes a small tool can make a big difference.

If you find parts of your job harder—like remembering steps, staying focused, or understanding written instructions—assistive technology might help.

Assistive technology means any tool, device, or app that helps you:

- Understand information more clearly
- Stay on track with your tasks
- Feel more confident and organized at work

If something helps you do your job better, it's worth using—and it's okay to ask for it.

Examples of Tools That Help You Do Your Job in Manufacturing

These are tools that have been helpful for people with learning differences on the job:

For Memory and Organization

- Timers or alarms to remind you of breaks or task changes
- Visual schedules or colour-coded labels
- Task apps or digital to-do lists
- Sticky notes or whiteboards to keep track of steps

For Reading and Understanding

- Text-to-speech software (reads text out loud)
- Enlarged text or simplified instructions
- Visual instructions with pictures or diagrams
- Colour filters or overlays for reading documents

For Writing or Communication

- Speech-to-text software (you talk, it types)
- Spell check tools or grammar aids
- Voice recorders to take notes or remember steps

For Hands-On Support



- Ergonomic tools that are easier to grip or use
- Simple machines or jigs that guide your hand during tasks
- Workstation layout changes to reduce distraction or clutter

These Tools Help Everyone

Many of these tools can be used by anyone - not just those with learning differences.

If something like a checklist, visual aid, or app helps you stay on track, it's worth using. These tools are not special treatment—they're productivity tools.

What If I Need One of These Tools?

You can ask your supervisor or HR about using tools like these. You can say something like:

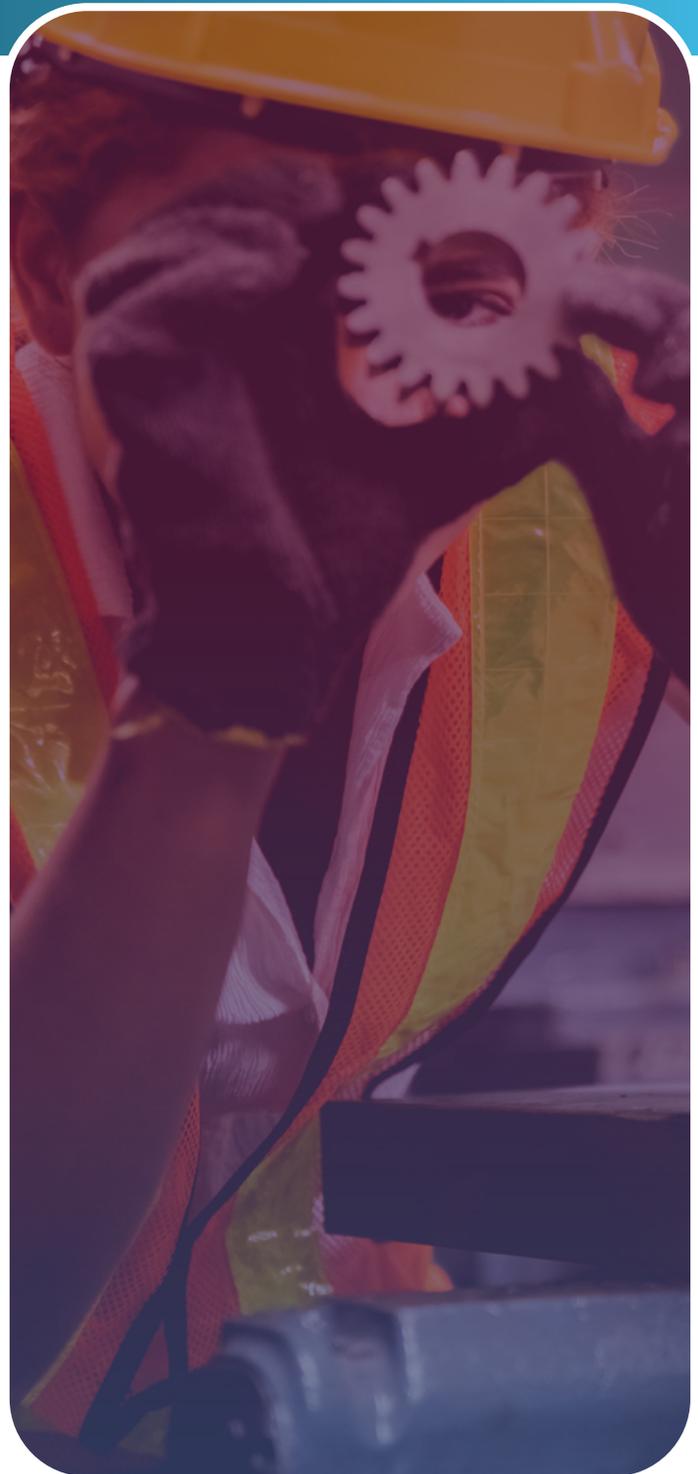
“A checklist would help me remember all the steps.”

“I use a timer to stay on track—can I keep one at my station?”

“I learn better with visual instructions. Is there a photo guide I could use?”

You don't have to explain everything about yourself. Just say what helps.

Find a listing of tools available in the **Where to Learn More** section of this toolkit.



3.5 Scenarios in Manufacturing: Tools That Helped on the Job



Assistive technology isn't always fancy or expensive. Sometimes it's just the right tool at the right time—like a checklist or a program that reads text out loud.

The stories below show how small changes helped real workers:

- Feel more confident
- Make fewer mistakes
- Get more done in less time

If you've ever felt frustrated with a task or wished there was a better way, these examples might feel familiar. The good news is you don't have to figure it out alone—and the right tool can make work a lot easier.

Scenario 1: Leo Uses a Checklist App to Stay on Track

Leo works in a plastics manufacturing plant. He's great with hands-on tasks but sometimes forgets a step or mixes up the order when setting up machines. This causes delays and means a supervisor has to double-check his work.

Leo started using a simple checklist app on his phone. It lets him check off each step as he does it. His supervisor also gave him a printed copy to keep at his station.

Since using the checklist:

- Leo makes fewer errors
- He works more independently
- He feels more confident at the start of each shift

Tool that helped: Digital checklist and printed step-by-step guide

Result: Fewer mistakes and more consistent productivity

Scenario 2: Priya Uses Text-to-Speech for Safety Forms

Priya works in a metal parts warehouse. She has trouble reading long documents, especially safety forms that are full of technical words. Sometimes she misses important details because she feels rushed or unsure.

HR set her up with a text-to-speech program on a shared tablet. Now she can listen to safety instructions instead of reading them on paper.

Since using the tool:

- She understands safety info more clearly
- She has fewer questions and feels more prepared
- She completes forms on time without stress

Tool that helped: Text-to-speech software

Result: Better understanding of safety procedures and improved task completion





Disclosure and Communication

4.1 Should You Tell Your Supervisor

Should I Tell My Supervisor I Need Support?

If something at work is hard because of how you learn, focus, or take in information, you might be thinking about asking for support.

You can ask for support without sharing a diagnosis or medical details if you want to keep that private. Sharing that you have a disability is called disclosure.

In Canada, you usually only need to share that you have a disability if you are asking for a formal accommodation based on disability under human rights law. In most cases, that means giving your employer a note or report from a qualified professional that explains your functional limitations – the specific things that make your job harder and why changes are needed.

There's no right or wrong choice. It's a personal decision, and this section can help you think it through.

Benefits of Sharing Your Needs

- You may be able to get changes or supports that help you do your job more easily, safely, or effectively
- You may feel more at ease – being open can reduce worry and help you feel more confident
- You might gain access to helpful tools and strategies – like checklists, extra training time, a quiet space, or visual instructions
- It can help build trust and communication with your supervisor or team
- If your needs are linked to protected characteristics, and supported by documentation, your employer may be required to accommodate you.



Key Things to Remember

- You don't have to decide today
- You can ask for help without disclosing a disability, but without documentation, your employer may not be legally required to make any changes
- You choose who to tell, when to tell, and what to share
- You have the right to be treated with respect at work

Supervisors Role and Communication

Should you wish to tell your supervisor, they might not be able to make changes right away. They can help you look at what options are already available where you work. This could include supports that are already in place, small changes to how you work, or starting a conversation about formal accommodations if needed.

Final Thoughts

Whether or not you choose to disclose is up to you. You might start with small changes and see how it goes before having a bigger conversation. Whatever you choose, remember this :

You deserve to feel supported, respected, and able to do your best work.



4.2 How to Talk About What You Need at Work

You Know What Helps—Now What?

If you've thought about what makes work harder and what would help, you might be ready to talk to someone at work—like your supervisor, lead hand, or HR.

You don't need to have all the answers.

The goal is simple: to explain what helps you do your job well.

You can share just enough to get the support you need. This is about building trust, solving problems early, and setting yourself up for success.

Keep It Focused on What Helps

You don't have to start by saying "I have a disability." You can start by talking about what would make the task easier, like this:

- I've noticed that I learn best when I can try a task hands-on. Would it be okay if I practiced this step with someone first?
- Sometimes I lose track when there are a lot of instructions at once. Could we break it into smaller steps?
- I've found that checklists really help me. Could I make one for this task?
- I've been using a timer at home to stay focused. Would it be okay to use one at my workstation?

Focus on what you need and why it helps.

Who Should I Talk To?

Start with someone you trust:

- Your direct supervisor
- A team lead or trainer
- Someone in HR
- A union representative (if you have one)

You don't have to share with your whole team—just the person who can help you get the support you need.

What About Privacy?

Anything you share about your learning needs should be kept private. Supervisors and HR should only share that information if it's needed to help set up support—and even then, only with your permission.

If you're not sure how it will be handled, you can ask:

“Will this be kept confidential?”

“Who else needs to know about this?”

Final Tip: Practice Helps

If you're nervous, it's okay to write down what you want to say or practice with someone you trust before the real conversation. You can even bring notes into the meeting.

Feeling prepared can make it easier to ask for the support you need.



4.3 Scenarios in Manufacturing: How Workers Asked for Help

Talking About What You Need Can Be Simple

If you're thinking about sharing what helps you at work, you don't have to say everything at once. You can just focus on what would make the job easier or how you learn best.

Some people start with a small conversation, others talk to HR, and some don't say anything until they feel ready. These examples show how different workers shared their needs in a way that was clear, respectful, and helpful—and how it worked out in a positive way.

Scenario: Malik Asks for a Checklist

Malik works on an assembly line in a small manufacturing company. He's fast and skilled with tools, but sometimes forgets a few steps when setting up for new jobs—especially if he's been given all the instructions at once.

Malik knows from past experience **that checklists help him stay on track**, but he's never brought it up before. After reading the toolkit, he decides to talk to his team lead during a shift change.

Malik's Script:

"Hey, I've noticed I sometimes miss a step when I'm getting started with a new setup. I've used checklists before, and they really help me stay focused. Would it be okay if I made one for this job?"

What Happened:

Malik's team lead was open and supportive. She said,

"Absolutely—if that helps, let's do it. I can even show you the one we used during training a few months ago. You can tweak it if you need to."

Malik made a simple checklist and posted it near his station. His setup times improved, and he felt more confident. A few weeks later, his team lead asked if she could share the idea with others, because the checklist was helping newer workers too.

Why It Worked:

- Malik focused on the task, not a diagnosis
- He kept it short, clear, and practical
- His team lead respected his input and followed through
- The support ended up benefiting the whole team



Scenario: Rosa Talks to HR About Her Learning Needs

Rosa works in a custom metal fabrication shop. She's great with precision work and follows safety rules carefully, but she struggles with long written instructions and remembering multiple steps at once—especially when things get busy.

She's been coping quietly, using her own reminders, but it's been stressful. She decides to talk to HR—not because anything is “wrong,” but because she wants to feel more confident and supported.

Rosa's Script (in a meeting with HR):

“I've noticed I sometimes lose track of steps when I'm working from written instructions. I've been managing it, but it's stressful. I work best with visual or step-by-step tools—things like diagrams or a task list. I'd like to talk about what might help.”

What Happened:

The HR advisor thanked Rosa for bringing it up and said:

“Thanks for letting us know. A lot of people learn best that way—this is absolutely something we can support.”

They reviewed the tasks Rosa was struggling with and identified a few quick changes:

- A laminated checklist Rosa could use at her station
- A visual version of the setup guide, created with the lead hand
- A quiet spot Rosa could use for reviewing instructions before a new job

Rosa didn't need to share any medical history. She felt respected, and her team appreciated the improved workflow.

Why It Worked:

- Rosa focused on the solution and explained what would help
- She chose to talk to HR, which gave her more privacy
- Her request was taken seriously and acted on quickly
- She got the tools she needed—without having to disclose a diagnosis



Tools for Success

5.1 Support Plan Worksheet

Summary

This one-page worksheet helps you bring together everything you've learned about **how you work best**. You can use it:

- Just for yourself
- As a guide when talking to your supervisor or HR
- To prepare for training, onboarding, or a new role

You don't have to fill out every part—but the more you understand about your strengths and needs, the easier it is to ask for the right support.

1. My Strengths at Work

I'm good at:

- Working with my hands
- Solving problems on the floor
- Focusing on physical tasks
- Helping new coworkers
- Spotting mistakes or safety issues
- Learning by doing
- Staying calm under pressure
- Something else: _____

2. What Makes Work Harder for Me

Sometimes I struggle with:

- Following long instructions
- Remembering multiple steps
- Written tasks or paperwork
- Noisy or busy environments
- Getting started or staying focused
- Learning quickly under pressure
- Something else: _____

3. What Helps Me Succeed

These tools or strategies work for me:

- Checklists or visual instructions
- Watching someone demonstrate the task
- Doing the task with coaching first
- Step-by-step instructions
- Timers, reminders, or routines
- Short breaks to reset
- A quieter space when learning something new
- Something else: _____

4. If I Choose to Share, I Might Say:

Use this space to write a simple statement or question you feel comfortable saying:

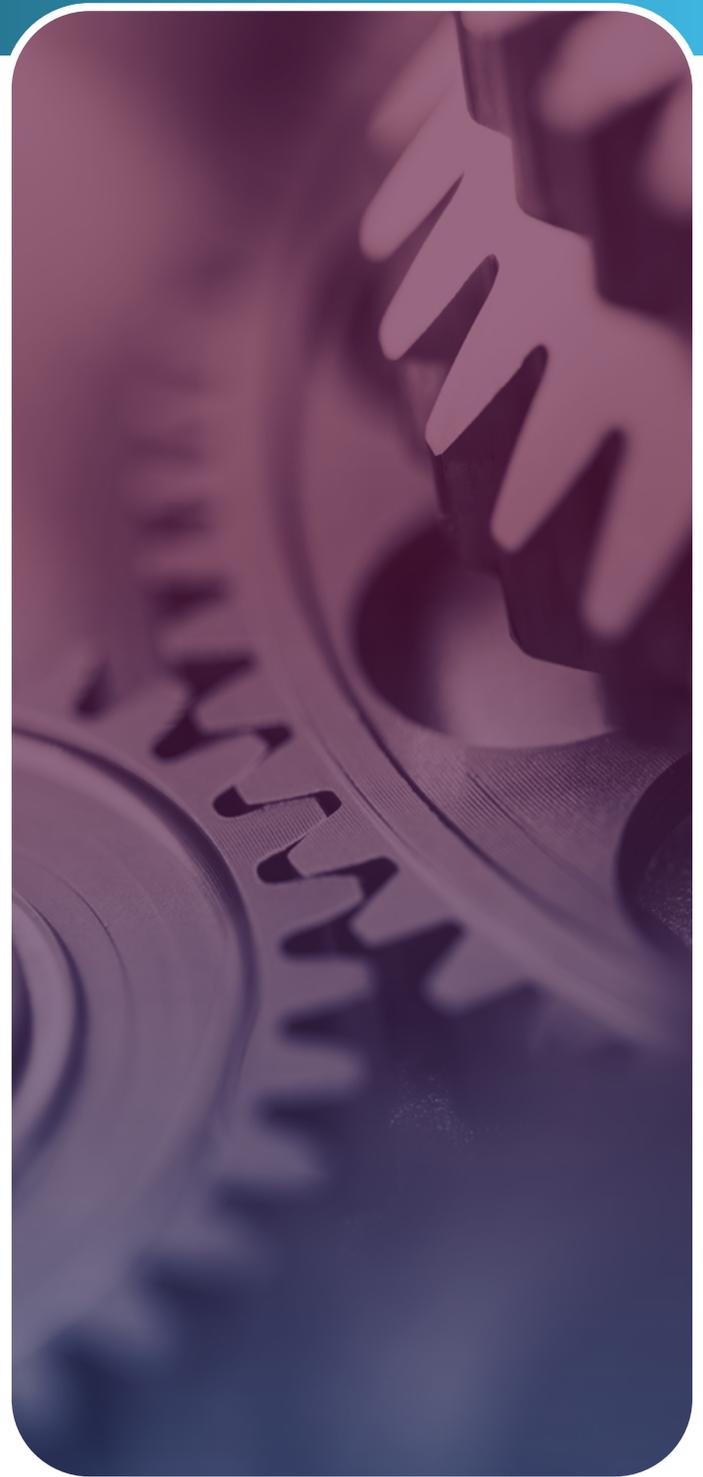
“I work best when _____.”

“It would help if I could use _____.”

“Is it ok if I try to use _____?”

This Is Just for You

You don't have to share this with anyone—but it can help you feel more prepared if you choose to talk about what you need.



5.2 Conversation Planner: Getting Ready to Talk to My Supervisor

Summary

If you're thinking about talking to someone at work about your learning needs, this planner can help you feel more ready. You can use it to:

- Decide what you want to say
- Choose the right time and person
- Keep the conversation focused on support

You don't have to use every part—but filling out even a few can boost your confidence.

1. What I Want to Talk About

- I'm finding part of the job harder than it needs to be
- I want to use a support tool or strategy
- I learn better in a certain way
- I want to explain how I work best
- Something else: _____

2. What's Hard for Me Right Now

Examples: remembering steps, written instructions, too many tasks at once

3. What Would Help

Examples: checklist, quiet space, demo instead of reading, extra time to practice

4. What I Might Say

You don't need to give personal details—just focus on what helps. Try writing one sentence here to get started:

"I've noticed that I work better when _____."

"Would it be okay if I used _____?"



5. Who Will I Talk To?

- My supervisor
 - A lead hand or trainer
 - Someone in HR
 - A union rep
 - Someone else:
-

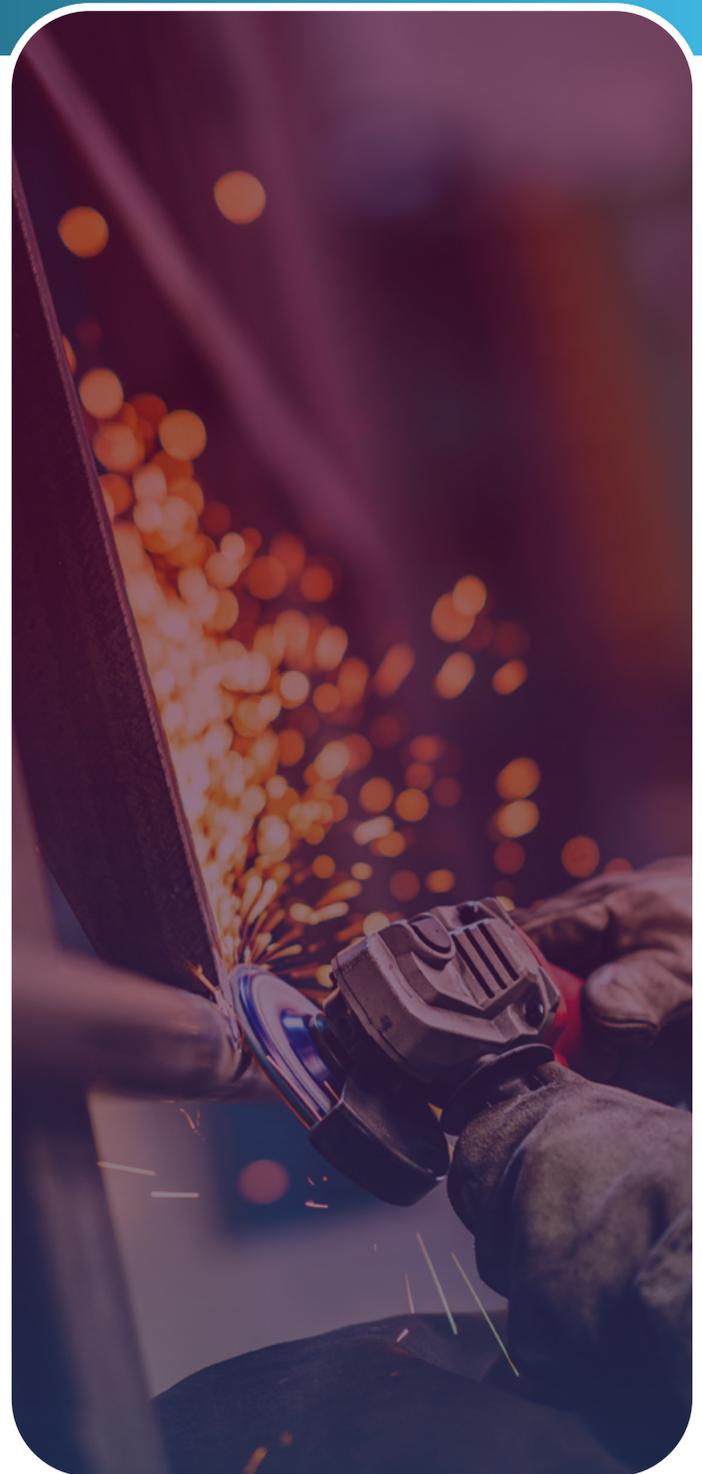
6. When Would Be a Good Time?

- During a check-in or team meeting
- At the end of a shift
- During a quiet moment
- I'll ask to set up a time

Optional Notes or Questions I Have

Reminder

You're allowed to ask for what helps you make your job easier. You don't have to explain everything, and you can take the lead in your own way.



5.3 You Are Not Alone: Stories of Success

Everyone Learns Differently—And That’s Okay

Sometimes it can feel like you’re the only one who finds certain parts of the job hard. But the truth is, many workers need support, and lots of people have found ways to succeed by speaking up, using tools, or working a little differently.

Here are a few short, examples from Canadian workplaces. These workers all had learning differences—and they all found small changes that made a big difference.

Marco – Learns by Watching

Marco works in custom wood production. He struggles with reading long job orders but is great at building when he sees the process first.

He asked his lead to walk through the steps out loud and show him the task once. After that, Marco worked independently and became one of the most efficient team members.

“I didn’t need anything fancy—just someone to show me instead of handing me a sheet.”

Jas – Gets Overwhelmed by Too Much at Once

Jas works in a busy packaging plant. She’s good at routines but gets overwhelmed when she has to learn too many steps at once.

She asked to break training into smaller pieces, with short check-ins along the way. Her trainer agreed, and Jas now helps others who need extra time.

“Once I learned how to ask, everything got easier.”

Alex – Uses Tools to Stay on Track

Alex has trouble with focus and remembering what comes next. He brought in a checklist app and uses a timer to manage tasks.

His supervisor saw how well it worked and offered to make visual guides for others too.

“I thought I had to hide it. But once I asked, I got what I needed—and so did other people.”

You’re Not Alone—And You’re Not a Problem

Whether you need a checklist, more time, hands-on learning, or a quiet moment to focus—you’re not asking for special treatment. You’re asking for what helps you do your best work.

Support is part of the job, and it’s okay to ask.





Where to Learn More

6.1 Where to Learn More

Additional Resources for Workers with Learning Differences in Canadian Manufacturing

Support and Workplace Rights

VLS Canada

Supports people with learning differences by providing assessments, diagnoses, and personalized strategies. www.vls-savcanada.com

Canadian Human Rights Commission
Information about your right to workplace support and accommodations.

<https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca>

Job Accommodation Service (Canada)

Helps workers and employers understand accommodation options.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/disability/consultations/job-accommodation-service.html>

Learning Differences and Tools

Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (LDAC)

Offers information about learning differences, strategies, and resources.

<https://www.ldac-acta.ca>

Neil Squire Society

Specializes in workplace support and tools for people with disabilities. <https://www.neilsquire.ca>

Assistive Technology Resource Centre (Ontario Tech University)

Explains common assistive tools and who they can help. <https://atrc.ontariotechu.ca>

Employment Support and Training

Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work (CCRW)

Helps job seekers and employees with disabilities—including learning differences—get support at work. <https://www.ccrw.org>

Ready, Willing and Able Supports inclusive hiring and connects workers with community partners.

<https://readywillingable.ca>

WorkBC (for British Columbia residents)

Offers support for job seekers, including those with cognitive or learning differences.

<https://www.workbc.ca>

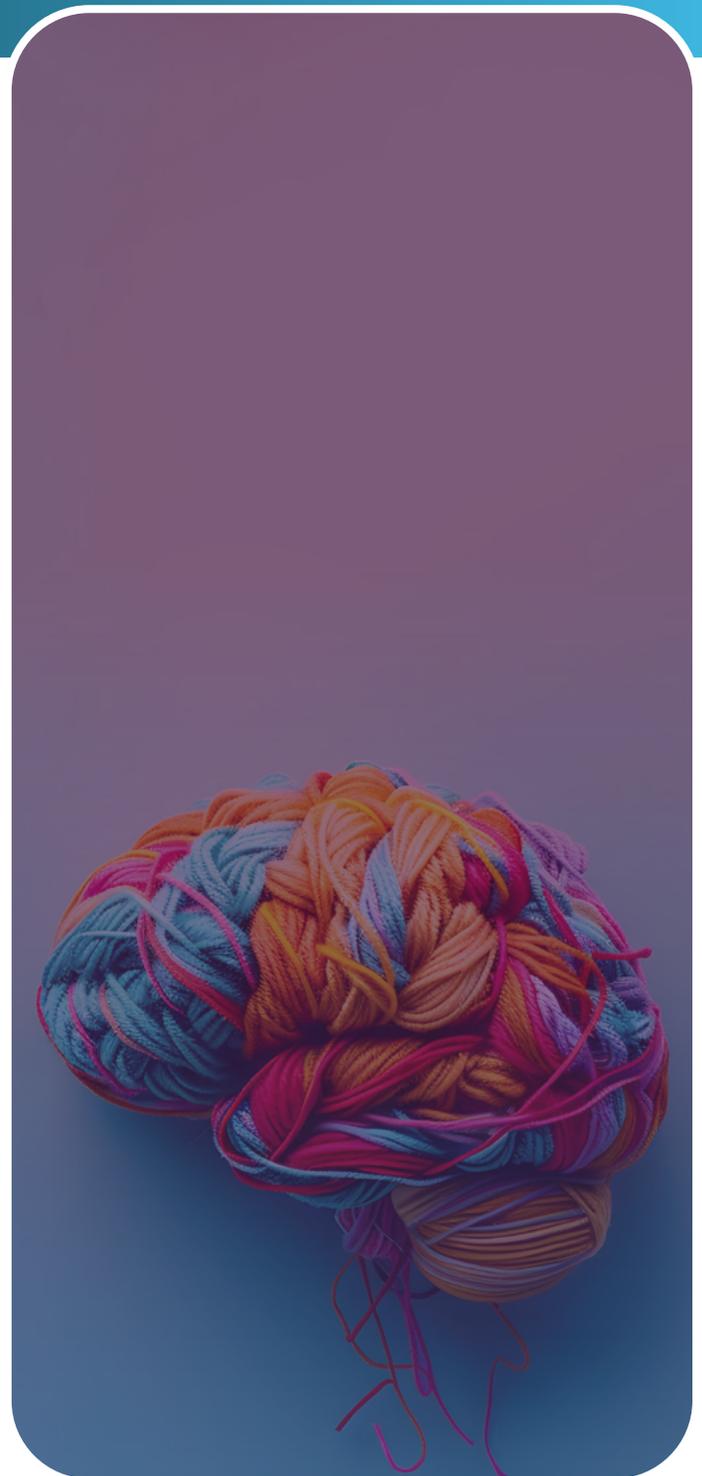
Alberta Workforce Essential Skills Society (AWES) Offers free self-study resources and workplace learning tools for Albertans. <https://awes.ca/online-self-study-resources>



Apps and Tools You Can Try

- Voice Notebook (speech-to-text for Android)
- NaturalReader (text-to-speech on desktop/mobile)
- Microsoft Immersive Reader (built into Word and Outlook)
- Todoist or Microsoft To Do (task list apps)
- Time Timer (visual countdown timer app)

Note: Many tools have free versions and are used by people with and without learning differences.



EMC has collaborated with VLS (Virtual Learning Strategist) Canada on this initiative. They have been instrumental in providing resources and feedback for this Toolkit to ensure that together we showcase a resource that will benefit all employees navigating Learning Differences in their workplace.





Improve
Training
Performance
and Workplace
Outcomes