Common Causes for Persistent Problems in Reading

- **Poor word attack skills**
  - Cannot link sounds to letters
  - Spacial confusion causing reversals
  - Cannot break down or blend sounds
  - Cannot break words into syllables
  - Cannot see patterns in syllables (onset/rhyme, vowel, consonant)

- **Poor automatic word recognition**
  - Lack of rich oral-language experiences
  - Has not encountered words multiple times in multiple contexts
  - Cannot analyze words using roots and affixes
  - Cannot infer a meaning by using context clues
  - Doesn’t relate to idioms or other forms of figurative language

- **Poor oral reading**
  - Cannot read in phrases
  - Cannot keep track of where they on the page
  - Ignores punctuation
  - Doesn’t read with expression
  - Doesn’t set personal goals and track progress

- **Poor comprehension**
  - Doesn’t set a purpose before reading
  - Doesn’t make connections to prior knowledge
  - Cannot create visual images of the information
  - Doesn’t predict or ask himself questions as he reads
  - Doesn’t know fix-up strategies and when to apply them
  - Doesn’t self-monitor to see if text makes sense
  - Doesn’t remember what was read

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Common Causes for Persistent Problems in Math

Poor problem solving skills
- Cannot read and restate the problem in his own words
- Can’t visualize the structure or patterns of problems
- Cannot break complex problems into logical steps
- Doesn’t know or apply strategies correctly
- Can’t make conjectures and justify his thinking
- Can’t identify correct operation or useful data

Poor fluency with basic facts
- Poor sense of counting and comparison of numbers
- Cannot visualize numbers and their relationships
- Cannot apply the properties of math to make computation easier
- Not doing the right type and amount of practice
- Asked to master new skills before prerequisites

Lack of perseverance
- Has “I can’t” attitude because of repeated failures
- Doesn’t set personal goals or track progress
- Needs frequent breaks to maintain energy and focus
- Difficult skills are required before prerequisite skills are in place
- Cannot visualize multiple ways of getting a reasonable result
- Doesn’t ask for help or access resources when stuck

Lack of self-monitoring
- Cannot estimate a reasonable answer
- Doesn’t see the real-life application
- Thinks finishing first is important
- Needs modeling, guided practice and feedback to know how to self-monitor
- Does not self-monitor because the culture of the room is that the teacher is the one who checks answers

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Common Causes for Writing Problems

Poor fluency
- Poor handwriting and spelling skills
- Cannot visualize or apply strategies (goal setting, brainstorming, planning, drafting, editing, revising)
- Unable to apply writing strategies and skills to own writing
- Hasn’t had enough guided practice to apply strategies
- Hasn’t learned to transfer skills to unfamiliar situations

Poor clarity and organization of thoughts
- Does not focus on audience and purpose
- Unable to sequence thoughts
- Uses awkward sentence structure (run-on sentences or short boring patterns)
- Cannot make smooth writing transitions
- Poor vocabulary or boring or unclear word choices

Weak editing and revision skills
- Focuses on too many things at once
- Needs clearer and more frequent feedback or modeling
- Fails to use feedback to make improvements
- Unable to use a rubric to self-check or give feedback to others
- Unaware of or doesn’t access resources for help with revisions and editing

Low motivation to write
- Has little self-confidence in his ability to write
- Doesn’t feel that it is safe to make mistakes
- Size and complexity of tasks is overwhelming
- Needs stronger guidance and/or support during the writing process
- Doesn’t track growth or types of error and adjust accordingly

Common Causes for Writing Problems

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Poor Attention and Focus

**Doesn't know what to focus on**
- Can't relate to the new information
  - Lacks a clear purpose for the task
  - Doesn't see similarities to prior knowledge
  - Task does not have personal importance
  - Cannot inhibit distractors
  - Stress is interfering with the ability to focus

**Can't sustain focus**
- Poor endurance
  - Cannot break large tasks down into manageable chunks
  - Overwhelmed by too much information given at once
  - Cannot work for long periods without a break
  - Lacks sufficient variety in ways to approach the task
  - Lacks enough support to keep frustration manageable
  - Cannot self-monitoring on-task behavior

**Poor transition skills**
- Lack of flexible thinking
  - Feels stress from fear of failure or unknown consequences
  - Unable to see clear goals and priorities
  - Is unable to work without seeing structure or patterns
  - Inability to use self-talk to plan before acting
  - Cannot adjust pace or plan to fit new situation
  - Has difficulty stopping one activity in order to start another
Common Causes for Memory Problems

Poor encoding to short-term memory
- Cannot create visual images of the information
- Cannot keep up with the pace of spoken instruction or directions
- Misses details and sequences
- Cannot break task down into manageable parts
- Distracted by irrelevant information
- Cannot switch efficiently from one task to another

Poor processing in working memory
- Cannot hold information long enough to copy it or work on it
- Cannot keep track of steps in a process
- Inability to see patterns and relationships
- Difficulty matching language with concepts and symbols
- Fails to self-correct due to losing focus on purpose and details

Poor storage in long-term memory
- Relies too much on rote learning
- Uses a weak or only one pathway to learn material
- Cannot link or categorize new learning with existing knowledge
- Does not make the effort when information is not seen as important
- Doesn’t ask for help or access resources when stuck

Poor retrieval from long-term memory
- Lack of the right type or amount of modeling and guided practice
- Cannot link to old information (similarities and differences)
- Doesn’t see the real-life application
- Needs multiple pathways for faster retrieval
- Has test anxiety, especially for long tasks

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Lack of Organization

Can't apply organization strategies

- Can't meet deadlines
  - Hasn't internalized a sense of how long X minutes feels like
  - Can't estimate how long tasks may take
  - Doesn't prioritize or sequence tasks well
  - Lacks a system for deadlines and taking breaks
  - Doesn't know how to get started
- Can't organize space & materials
  - Doesn't see why a task is important
  - Has poor sorting and classifying skills
  - Can't remember rules and patterns for organizing
  - Can't visualize a finished product or the plan to achieve it
- Can't organize ideas
  - Doesn't establish a clear purpose for organizing
  - Can't brainstorm ideas for organizing or establish priorities
  - Doesn't understand the importance of a draft plan
  - Can't sequence ideas or tasks in a logical way
  - Does not know how to refine and revise a plan

Doesn't stay organized

- Can't transfer skills to unfamiliar settings
  - Cannot visualize how, when or where to apply skill
  - Overly dependent on others
  - Is using an organization system that does not match personal style
  - Doesn't feel enough pay-off is worth the effort required
  - Doesn't reflect and adjust regularly
- Task paralysis due to anxiety or false beliefs
  - Avoids boring or difficult tasks
  - Has an unhealthy fear of criticism or mistakes
  - Has unclear expectations and priorities
  - Doesn't see how organization impacts success
  - Lacks self-confidence due to limited success

Procrastinates

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Problem Solving

Can't get started

Can't visualize the goal
  - Can't visualize the final product
  - Goal does not seem important or reasonable
  - Does not know how to set goals and subgoals for himself

Can't visualize an action plan
  - Can't break big task down into small steps
  - Can't put steps in logical order
  - Cannot remember the action plan steps
  - Cannot stay focused because of unanticipated roadblocks

No sense of urgency
  - Does not see the task as relevant or as a priority
  - Unable to accurately estimate the time tasks may take
  - Cannot delay gratification of immediate want
  - Feels overwhelmed by and avoids tasks

Doesn't follow through

No backup plan
  - Does not anticipate barriers or consequences
  - Cannot identify resources
  - Doesn't know when or how to ask for help
  - Doesn't know or use fix-up strategies
  - Is not aware of when he needs help

Poor self-monitoring

Doesn't follow through
  - Cannot identify attributes of a quality product
  - Cannot use rubrics and checklists to self-assess
  - Doesn't recognize signs of stress and fear in time to cope
  - Needs strategies for self-soothing when fearful or upset.
  - Doesn't link his actions with outcomes
  - Doesn't give himself credit for small successes

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Lack of motivation

Student expects to fail
- Track record of repeated failure (less than 80% success)
  - Belief that failure is due to the teacher not liking him or that he isn’t smart enough
  - Believes that his effort will not make a difference
  - Student is unaware of resources or how to access them

Task is not relevant
- Student doesn’t see how material applies or has no sense of ownership in the learning
  - Level of material is too hard or too easy

Threat of failure is greater than desire to achieve
- Fear of public embarrassment
  - Focus is on grades rather than learning from mistakes

Unable to accurately judge the amount of effort required
- Lack of self-monitoring skills
  - Inability to break goals and tasks down into manageable steps
  - Inability to accurately estimate time required for tasks

- Insufficient amount of helpful and specific feedback
  - Insufficient modeling and practice before assignment or tests
Common Causes for Impulsiveness and Poor Self-Monitoring

Unable to delay gratification
- Reacts before thinking
  - Cannot distinguish feelings from actions or wants from needs
  - Needs attention or higher level of stimulation
  - Is unable to slow down and use self-talk to calm down
  - Has trouble internalizing rules and procedures even if he knows them
  - Has limited repertoire of appropriate options for responding
  - Needs more structure and routine
  - Is unsure of how his actions affect others

Unable to cope with frustration or anger
- Feels discouraged or helpless
  - Cannot articulate the problem or feelings
  - Avoids situations that are too difficult or boring
  - Cannot identify what triggers problems and stress
  - Retaliates for perceives mistreatment
  - Cannot reframe (see things from a new perspective)
  - Doesn’t know how to gain power, attention and control appropriately
  - Student expects to fail because of frequent failures in the past

Unable to adjust behavior to a situation
- Unaware of how his behavior affects others
  - Is unclear about expectations or goals
  - Doesn’t pick up on feedback that indicates the need to alter behavior
  - Needs to practice appropriate behavior while calm
  - Cannot accurately predict consequences
  - Needs positive corrective feedback to reinforce progress
  - Unable to use past experiences to self-correct

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