

Learning Reference Sheet

March 2026

Summary	Preschool / Early Elementary School	Later Elementary School	Middle / High School	College / Young Adulthood
Reading				
Children with SB may at times have challenges with reading. Many recognize common words and sound out new ones, but understanding the meaning of what they read can be harder. A reading problem by itself is not very common—about 3 out of 100 children. However, having both reading and math difficulties together is more common—about 26 out of 100 children with SB.	Children with SB often do well with the basics of reading. They usually know their letters, can recognize many sight words, and can sound out made-up words. These skills are real strengths. But sometimes these early strengths can hide later challenges. As children grow, they may have more trouble with reading comprehension—understanding the meaning of what they read. Parents and teachers should keep an eye on this, because strong basic reading does not always mean strong understanding.	During elementary school, children with SB often stay strong in basic reading skills. They can recognize sight words and sound out words, even ones that are made up. But as grades go up, reading comprehension—understanding what they read—can become harder. Many children do best when reading single sentences. Longer passages, like paragraphs or whole stories, can feel overwhelming because they require putting many ideas together.	As children with SB move into higher grades, their word reading skills usually stay strong. They can recognize words and sound them out well. The bigger challenge often comes with understanding what the text really means. Longer passages that ask children to connect ideas, put information together, and make guesses about meaning, can be tough, even when word reading itself is easy.	Many adults with SB continue to be strong at word reading. They can recognize and read words accurately. Reading comprehension—understanding the meaning—often remains harder. Making guesses about meaning or connecting ideas in longer texts can still be a challenge. Even so, most adults have the reading skills they need for daily life. Stronger reading and math skills are linked to more opportunities and experiences in adulthood for people with SB.
Math				
Math disability is a common area of lifetime difficulty in SB. Estimates suggest that 29% of children with SB have an isolated math learning disability (achievement <25th percentile), and an additional 26% have math and reading disabilities. Math disability in SB can be identified at an early age.	One-to-one counting correspondence, rote counting, and matching-based-on-quantity are common areas of early math difficulty. Preschool screening of these skills is a useful way to identify children with SB at risk for math disability who may require intervention.	Math fact retrieval is often intact in youth with SB but may be performed more slowly or performed using less- mature counting strategies (e.g., finger counting, “counting up”). Math procedures (e.g., “borrowing from zero” during subtraction) can be areas of difficulty, and may result from periodic attentional “slips” and/or from an overt lack of procedural math knowledge.	Math becomes increasingly complex in higher grades, and topics such as geometry and estimation place increased demands upon common areas of cognitive weakness in SB, e.g., working memory, executive functions, mental manipulation of visual / spatial information.	Difficulties in computation accuracy, speed, math problem solving, and functional numeracy can persist, and can interfere with “real world” functional skills such as price comparisons, value of coins, banking and budgeting, and time concepts. To a greater extent than functional literacy, functional math skills are related to self-reported levels of social and personal autonomy in SB.

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Executive Functions				
ADHD in youth with SB falls at around 30%, with inattentive type most frequently noted. Many youths with SB struggle with task initiation, planning, and organization.	Children with SB often respond well to the routine of early classroom structures, including “built-in” prompts and step-by-step directions.	The transition into third and fourth grades (e.g., “reading to learn” instead of “learning to read”) places additional organizational demands upon children with SB, and this change in expectations often “unmasks” underlying difficulties in executive functions.	Transition into middle school puts added organizational demands upon youth with SB, and often includes extra tasks (e.g., catheterization) they must “remember to remember” to complete.	Executive functioning difficulties appear to persist into young adulthood in many individuals with SB and should be actively accounted for in the process of transition into college or work settings.
Processing				
Strength is often seen in the ability to form associations (e.g., associative processing) such as forming associations between words and their definitions). Weaknesses often occur in the ability to integrate information (e.g., assembled processing).	Strengths in forming associations often support the development of good functional language skills, categorical knowledge, and age-appropriate word reading abilities in children with SB.	In early adolescence, youth with SB often find it increasingly difficult to comprehend complex oral and written language. This is most evident when oral or written communication requires the active construction of meaning and the integration of multiple sources of information, e.g., word definitions, past experiences, social context, etc.	Difficulty integrating information can disrupt social competence, particularly if an adolescent with SB has trouble using past and current social experiences to assess how well he or she is being received by others.	While young adults with SB often report high quality of life, many also report social participation restrictions, unemployment, and difficulty moving into more independent living arrangements. For these reasons, school-based efforts to address processing concerns and learning difficulties prior to young adulthood are essential.