Students with learning difficulties are slowed down by their lack of automaticity with lower-order academic skills such as recall of basic number facts and word recognition. Automaticity is inferred when such lower-order processes become fast, routine, and independent, and require only small amounts of cognitive resources.

The following theoretical and pragmatic reasons support the importance of developing automatic performance of low-level academic tasks and recall of basic facts in reading and numeracy:

- cognitive capacity (or 'working memory') in humans is limited;
- once students' ability to perform basic academic tasks and recall basic facts becomes truly automatic, they cannot help but recall this information and have it available for use in other settings and on more complex tasks;
- the ability to recall information quickly is not subject to conscious control and therefore uses minimal cognitive capacity; and
- automatic performance of low-level academic tasks allows for small decreases in time to accrue in undertaking subtasks, freeing up working memory.

Once students have sound conceptual understandings, developing automaticity in basic academic skills can enable students with learning difficulties to use their working memory resources more efficiently, so that they are better able to engage with the more interesting aspects of learning – the novel concepts, complex content and rich tasks that usually require higher order thinking and learning skills.
The *QuickSmart* mathematics and literacy sessions include guided and independent practice activities (such as flash cards and speed sheets) that aim to develop the learner's ability to recall basic facts automatically. Automaticity is reinforced by the use of appropriate games and by the routine assessment of the speed and accuracy with which the basic facts are recalled.