

Dyslexia

The British Dyslexia Association defines dyslexia as “A learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling.” A person with dyslexia may mix up letters within words and words within sentences while reading and/or spelling. There is a common misconception that dyslexia only affects a person’s ability to read and write. In reality, dyslexia can affect memory, organisation, time-keeping, concentration, multi-tasking and communication.

Dyslexia affects individuals in different ways and by varying degrees, so it is classed as a spectrum difficulty. The British Dyslexia Association states that around 10% of the population have dyslexia, 4% of whom have severe dyslexia.

It is one of a family of ‘Specific Learning Difficulties’. These are characterised by a person having difficulties in areas such as working memory, auditory processing and phonological awareness (the sound structure of words). The difficulties are neurological and affect the way the brain receives, processes and learns information. Specific learning difficulties may occur on their own or together. The other SpLDs which may sometimes occur with dyslexia are:

- Visual stress (where words lack clarity or stability).
- Dyspraxia and developmental coordination disorder (this can affect fine and gross motor control which may lead to poor handwriting).
- Dyscalculia (a difficulty with mathematics and the concept of numbers).
- ADHD (a difficulty with maintaining attention and concentrating).

Top Tips

Presentation of text

- Visual stress can occur due to high contrast levels when reading. Experiment with changing the colour of texts and backgrounds. Generally white backgrounds should be avoided and the use of cream or pastel-coloured backgrounds with dark text will help with clarity.
- Coloured overlays that change the colour of the background can be used.
- Avoid using gloss paper due to the glare given off.
- Use sans serif fonts e.g. Arial, Tahoma, Comic Sans
- Font size should be 12-14 point (or larger if requested)
- Left-align all text
- If requested, larger inter-letter, inter-word and line spacing can be used.
- Avoid underlining and italics. Bold can be used for emphasis.

Communication

- Try to reduce the number of verbal instructions given at a time and check understanding. Regularly repeat the instructions given.

- Allow learners time to think about their responses to questions asked.

Support Learning

- Providing notes for the session may be beneficial as it can be difficult for learners to listen and take notes
- Use a numbered list of no more than four or five instructions.
- Provide a key word list of subject-specific words.
- Mind mapping can be suggested to help learners to plan and organise their ideas. Highlighters might also be effective to emphasise key words.

Resources

Flux

<https://justgetflux.com/>

Flux is a free application that changes the colour of your computer's display according to the time of day. It removes the blue light that your computer or device uses in the screen, reducing headaches and eye strain.

OpenDyslexic

<https://www.opendyslexic.org/>

This is a free font that you can download. It increases readability for readers with Dyslexia as the letters have a unique shape with a bold bottom.

Immersive Reader view on Microsoft Word

When in Microsoft Word, click on 'View' and 'Immersive Reader'. This allows you to change the font, have words/ sentences read out.

Natural Readers

<https://naturalreaders.com>

Text to speech programme that changes written text into spoken words.

Colorveil

<https://www.east-tec.com/colorveil>

Available on Windows devices. This adds a customisable colour filter over your desktop, internet browser, document or program.

Mind Mapping Software

Simple Mind app

Basic app is free, add-ons need to be paid for.

MS OneNote

This simple and very visual software can help organise various media into one document; thoughts, ideas, links to web pages, images, voice recordings can all be embedded into the document.

Sticky Notes

Acts as a visual (words/images) reminder of tasks that need to be completed. The fact that it is on screen means that it can't be misplaced or lost.