

HOW CAN I HELP THE DYSLEXIC PUPILS WHILE I TEACH EVERYONE?

(Adapted, with kind permission, from the Dyslexia Institute, England)



HOW CAN I RECOGNISE DYSLEXIC SYMPTOMS?

All Ages

- Is he/she bright in some ways with a “block” in others?
- Does he/she have difficulty carrying out three instructions in sequence?
- Was he/she late in learning to talk, or with speaking clearly?

Ages 7-11

- Does he/she have particular difficulty with reading or spelling?
- Does he/she put figures or letters the wrong way, e.g. 15 for 51, 6 for 9, b for d, was for saw?
- Does he/she read a word then fail to recognise it further down the page?
- Does he/she spell a word several different ways without recognising the correct version?
- Does he/she have a poor concentration span for reading and writing?
- Does he/she have difficulty understanding time and tense?
- Does he/she confuse left and right?
- Does he/she answer questions orally but have difficulty writing the answer?
- Is he/she unusually clumsy?
- Does he/she have trouble with sounds in words, e.g. poor sense of rhyme?

Ages 12 – Adult

- Is he/she sometimes inaccurate in reading?
- Is his/her spelling poor?
- Does he/she have difficulty taking notes or copying?
- Does he/she have difficulty with planning and writing essays, letters or reports?

ADVICE FOR TEACHERS ON RECOGNISING THE DYSLEXIC CHILD

If you answer yes to most of these questions you may like to think how you can adapt your teaching style.

- Does this child puzzle you?
- Is the standard of his/her work erratic?
- Does the standard of his/her reading and written work fall below your expectations of his/her ability?
- Is he/she unable to remember a list of instructions? Is he able to read a word on one line and unable to recognise it further down the page?
- Does he/she spell the same word in a variety of ways?
- Does he/she have difficulty copying from the blackboard?
- Does he/she confuse symbols, e.g. in maths, + , X ?
- Does he/she use spoonerisms, e.g. Par Cark?
- Does he/she surprise you with the amount of effort he puts into his/her work and the little he/she has to show for it?
- Is he/she clumsy in some respects, but very good in others, e.g. manipulating things like LEGO?
- Is he/she the classroom clown?
- Is his/her concentration poor?
- Are his/her difficulties so severe that he/she needs specialist help? If so, can you set it in motion?

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BUILDING FOR SUCCESS

Teachers often ask how they can help a dyslexic child in class. Here are a few suggestions; some may seem too obvious to mention and others too difficult to implement. What can be done must depend on the circumstances and on the ingenuity of the individual teacher. Please remember that the learning environment can make the difference between success or failure for a dyslexic pupil. He has difficulties listening, learning, looking, sitting still, concentrating and finding things. The quieter and more organised the working environment, the greater the chance he has of success.

Do...

- Praise wherever possible
- Encourage
- Find something he/she is good at
- Give less homework (e.g. shorter essays, or underline main points to learn)
- Mark written work on content (not spelling) -tick what is right instead of crossing what is wrong
- Mark on oral responses when possible
- If reading long words, divide syllables with a pencil line
- Help him/her to pronounce words correctly
- Put him/her at the front of the class so you can help
- Make sure he understood and remembered instructions
- Let him work with textbook open
- Put important words on the chalkboard clearly
- Give him plenty of time to copy from the board
- Check whether he knows his alphabet, and that he can say the days of the week and months of the year in the right sequence, also whether he can tell the time
- Send an exercise book home with him, with homework assignments written in, and a note of important things to remember (e.g. swimming things)
- Have expectations of success

Do Not...

- Make a dyslexic read aloud in public if he is reluctant to do so
- Ridicule or employ sarcasm
- Correct all mistakes in written work -it's too discouraging
- Give lists of spelling words to learn; two or three are as much as he will manage and it is better if they are related e.g. plate cake name
- Make him write out work again

- Compare him with others
- Make him change his writing e.g. put loops if he doesn't

Remember a dyslexic person...

- Tires more quickly than a 'normal' person; far greater concentration is required
- May read a passage correctly yet not get the sense of it
- May have great difficulty with figures (e.g. learning tables), reading music or anything which entails
- Usually has difficulty learning foreign languages
- Is inconsistent in performance
- May omit words, or write words twice
- Suffers from constant, nagging uncertainty
- Cannot take good notes because he is unable to listen and write at the same time
- May have great difficulty in finding his place again when he looks away from a book he is reading or a board he is copying from
- Reads slowly because of his difficulties, so is always under pressure of time
- Will probably be personally disorganised - he may also be clumsy and forgetful, no matter how hard he tries
- Is likely to have difficulty following a string of instructions

FOR TEACHERS IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

1. Use wooden or plastic letters to teach the names, sounds and alphabet sequence. Have him close his eyes to feel the shape and remember the associated sound/sounds.
2. Use pictures and memory books (such as in Letterland).
3. Use the labels vowels and consonants and teach about the jobs they do.
4. Teach joined up writing from an early age - practice in the air, in sand, on the board and in books.
5. Follow a structured classroom program that introduces the concepts of letters and words, teaches sentence and paragraph construction, models different styles of writing (genres) and provides plenty of opportunities for practice.
6. Let children develop their own word bank/dictionary where they can record their own 'difficult' words.
7. Talk about letters, words, stories to create an interest in words and books

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8. Use technical aids to individualise work -tape recorder and earphones, computers, etc
9. Play games to reinforce learning
10. Give as much practice in reading, writing and spelling as possible to develop automatic skills -remember dyslexic children need more practice than most children.

FOR TEACHERS IN SECONDARY SCHOOL

1. Leave notes on the board as long as possible - interpreting symbols the dyslexic students takes longer to copy
2. Tidy board presentation and use of different colours for different sections will help accurate copying
3. Photocopied summary notes help enormously - hand out at the end so that they listen instead of trying to read them (or refer to them and encourage everyone to highlight main points)
4. Encourage use of a word processor for course work and provide opportunities for keyboard practice
5. Mark positively -more ticks for the good bits! 6. Teach good study skills -this should help ALL students
6. Encourage students to be aware of and evaluate the strategies they use for study (this can be done effectively in study skills program)
7. Provide a list of key vocabulary for your subject and insist that these words be learned (excuse other homework if necessary)
8. Well before the exams, get the group to check that they have a complete set of notes. Offer a 'surgery' when they can come to ask you about omissions, bits they cannot understand or can't read their own writing!
9. Always seek opportunities to praise

STUDY SKILLS FOR STUDENTS

It is NOT a good idea to try studying for long stretches at a time without a break. The most effective time is 20 to 40 minutes, followed by a 5-minute break. Generally 25 minutes work, then 5 minutes break works well.

How do You think?

- In pictures?
- In words?

(Last Updated June 2010)

Try to discover whether you remember information better if you receive it by:

- Listening
- Reading
- Looking at pictures or diagrams
- Writing it down
- Discussing and asking questions
- Making notes
- A combination of the above

Most people learn best by using more than one sense (e.g. hearing, seeing AND writing). Most people learn best by ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT. Just looking at the material to be learned is as much use as putting a book on your head and hoping it will sink in!

Try these examples:

1. You have reading to do, with a test tomorrow
 - SKIM the text, then read it, noting the MAIN POINTS
 - Use the main points to create a mind map
 - Check with the text to see if you got it right
 - Next morning, take two minutes using the mind map to refresh your memory
2. Memorising formulae
 - Write them down
 - Say each one aloud
 - Chant each one in a rhythm
 - Cover each one and try to write it again
 - Check if you were right
 - Write chemical formulae on small cards, with the names on the back. Spread them out on the table and use them to test yourself
3. Learning for exams
 - Plan in advance
 - Make a list of topics within each subject
 - Fit topics into one or more 25 minute "time chunks"
 - Use the techniques suggested under " 1: test tomorrow" above to revise each topic
 - Have another look at your keywords, notes or mind maps the following day
 - Look at keywords, notes and mind maps a week later and again just before the exam to keep the information in your memory
 - **Don't leave it until the last minute!**