

## Supporting Dyslexic Pupils in the classroom



### HOW DOES THE DYSLEXIC PUPIL LEARN?

The dyslexic pupil must be shown ....

- The big picture and then how the details fit into it.
- From parts to whole
- From the easy to the more difficult
- From the simple to the complex
- From the concrete to the abstract
- From the visual to the auditory
- Always showing him how new information fits in with what he has learned
- With much review and practice at every step of the way

The dyslexic pupil is **NOT**...

- An incidental learner (won't necessarily grasp concepts intuitively). He must be *directly* taught (shown) everything.
- Lazy! He is doing his best. It takes much more energy for the dyslexic pupil to get through the day and to do even average work, than it does the average pupil. This is because of processing and working memory difficulties.

The dyslexic pupil needs ...

- a quiet, calm, structured, orderly, consistent and respectful environment
- one or two verbal instructions at a time
- short, simple instructions with few words. Then ask, "*What do you think you heard me say?*"
- a *simultaneous* multi-sensory structured approach to his language learning that uses all three pathways of learning: Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic-Tactile
- to be given every opportunity to use his creativity in his learning.
- time to process what he has heard
- time to respond
- time to complete assignments/ activities

The dyslexic pupil may **appear**...



- to be not paying attention when in fact he is experiencing an overload. He may even get a “glazed” look on his face, he can’t help this! We can help him by using the strategies above and by giving him **the gift of time**.

## **SUPPORTING PUPILS WITH DYSLEXIA IN ALL CLASSROOM SETTINGS**



Teaching pupils with dyslexia across settings is challenging. It is important to help teachers provide adjustments that are reasonable and practical in all classroom settings. The following adjustments should be part of normal classroom practice and will provide a scaffold to support a range of pupils with additional needs.

With the right support from teachers and the use of technology, simple changes can make a big difference to the dyslexic pupil. Technology is an important tool that can be used to support pupils with dyslexia with reading and writing. However, you should note that dyslexia manifests itself differently amongst children so it's important to try a combination of methods to find out what works best for them.



## SUPPORT INVOLVING MATERIALS

### 1. Use a device to record instructions.

Many problems with materials are related to reading difficulties. A device that can record is an excellent aid in overcoming this problem. Directions, stories, and specific lessons can be recorded. The pupil can replay to clarify understanding of directions or concepts. Also, to improve reading skills, the pupil can read the printed words silently as they are replayed.



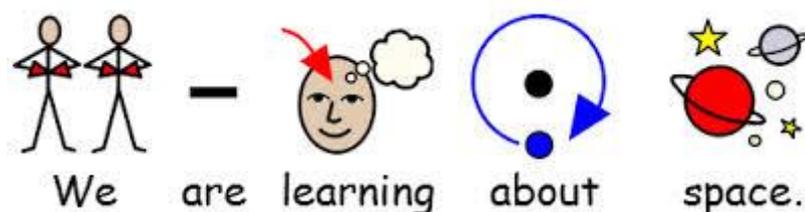
### 2. Clarify or simplify written directions.

Some directions are written in paragraph form and contain too much information. This is often overwhelming for some pupils. The teacher can help by:

- underlining or highlighting the significant parts of the directions.
- Simplifying the instructions is often helpful. *For example*  
*Original instructions:* This exercise will show how well you can locate conjunctions. Read each sentence. Look for the conjunctions. When you locate a conjunction, find it in the list of conjunctions under each sentence. Then circle the number of your answer in the answer column.  
*Simplified instructions:* Read each sentence and circle all conjunctions.
- Teachers should ensure that documents given to pupils with dyslexia only contain instructions needed for the exercise or activity without any unnecessary detail as these could be distracting.
- All materials for pupils with dyslexia should have a clear layout, short sentences and an uncomplicated structure. (see [supporting reading](#) document for more information about adapting reading materials and making worksheets)

### Illustrations

Images that illustrate sentences or unfamiliar words are really useful. By spacing out the instructions and adding a diagram, pupils can follow it without having to understand every word.



## Add vocabulary word map

### Fonts and background colours

Software that is regularly used in schools, such as Microsoft Word, is a good resource for fonts and background colours. Changing the background colour can help some pupils. This could be background colours of worksheets and smart boards.

Using appropriate fonts can make print more accessible for the dyslexic pupil. For example you can download free specialist fonts, such as [OpenDyslexic](#), which are free and can run on Microsoft software. This font adds gravity and weight to the document and is thicker at the bottom as shown in the image below. Pupils who find characters invert or swim should try using this font.

ABCDEFGHIJKLM

NOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklm

nopqrstuvwxyz

Again, one size does not fit all and you should test it with your pupils to see what works best for them.

### 3. Present a small amount of work.

The teacher can adapt workbooks and materials to reduce the content so the pupil is not over faced, you could use tools such as Communicate in Print or alternatively photocopy parts or use cut and paste.

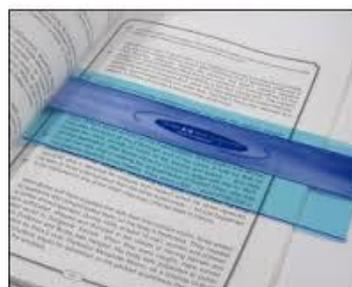
Alternatively, the teacher can ask the pupil to complete only odd-numbered problems or items with stars by them, or can provide answers and ask the pupil to match them to the questions. The teacher can actually cut the worksheet into sections and give the pupil section by section.

### 4. Block out surplus stimuli.

If a pupil is easily distracted by visual stimuli on a full worksheet or page, a blank sheet of paper can be used to cover sections of the page not being worked on at the time. Encourage the pupil to do this independently. Also, line markers can be used to aid reading, and windows can be used to display individual math problems. Coloured reading rulers and magnifying aids for reading may also be helpful.



Visual Tracking Magnifier



Coloured reading ruler

### **5. Highlight essential information.**

If a pupil can read text but has difficulty finding the essential information, the teacher can highlight key information.



### **6. Find place in work books, diaries etc.**

In workbooks, exercise books etc where pupils progress sequentially the pupil can make a diagonal cut across the lower right-hand corner of the pages as they are completed. With all the completed pages cut, the pupil and teacher can readily locate the next page that needs to be corrected or completed.

### **7. Provide additional practice activities.**

Provide over learning activities to embed learning. This could include instructional games, peer teaching activities, self-correcting materials, computer software programs, and additional worksheets.



### **8. Provide a glossary for specific topics.**

At Upper KS2 and secondary level, the specific language of certain subjects can be problematic. Pre teaching of vocabulary and also a glossary would be helpful to dyslexic pupils.

### **9. Develop reading guides (a reading road map)**

Provide a reading road map; this is a summary of main points and key information with sign posts of where it can be found in the text. Make it as visual as possible. This can be developed paragraph-by-paragraph, page-by-page, or section-by-section.

## Text readers and additional support

There are a variety of text readers available including a free version developed by a teacher called [WordTalk](#), which runs on Microsoft Word. You can set this to read one word at a time, one paragraph at a time or continuously. It can also convert text to MP3 so pupils can record their own voice as an audio comment which is great for capturing their ideas straight away to revise later. Similar to Word, when using text readers the background can be changed to the preferred colour for further help.



Texthelp's [Read&Write Gold](#) literacy support software offers additional highly-effective features that are not available on the free software. It has a reading tool with quality voices and pupils have access to a dictionary. This dictionary is more sophisticated than the standard one in Word – it checks every word and offers a homophone or 'sounds like' facility which picks up on words that sound the same but have different spellings and meanings.



## Using and building additional resources

[Load2Learn](#) and [Books4All](#) are useful sites where teachers can download free accessible resources, especially books, to help pupils with dyslexia. These resources are made by educational professionals who have an interest in providing support.



## SUPPORT INVOLVING INTERACTIVE TEACHING

### 1. Use explicit teaching procedures/ structure.

Teachers can include explicit teaching steps within their lessons (i.e., when introducing a new concept/ procedure model it, scaffold it and work through with the pupils, allow pupils to work through a scaffold on their own, help to correct any mistakes misunderstandings, set up practice activities, monitor the work, review the work.

### 2. Repeat directions.

Pupils who have difficulty following directions are often helped by asking them to repeat the directions in their own words.

The pupil can repeat the directions to a peer when the teacher is unavailable.

The following suggestions can help pupils understand directions:

- if directions contain several steps, break down the directions into separate steps;

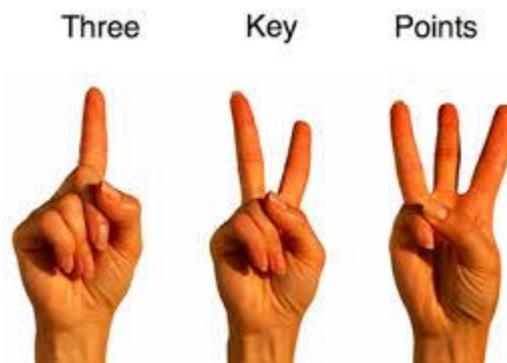


**7. Simultaneously combine verbal and visual information.**

Verbal information should be provided with visual displays (e.g. on a white board or handout).

**8. Write key points or words on the whiteboard.**

Prior to an activity or lesson, the teacher can write new vocabulary words and key points on the board.

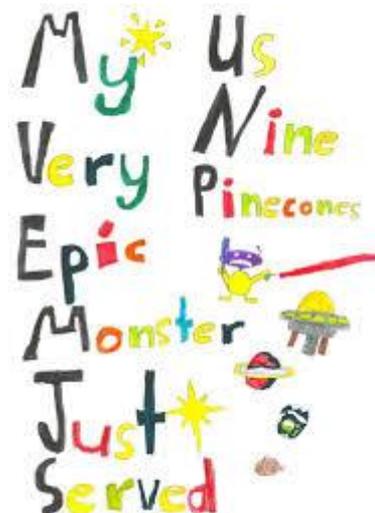


**9. Use balanced activities.**

An effort should be made to balance oral with visual information and to intersperse teacher talk with hands on activities. Also, there should be a balance between large group, small group, and individual activities.

**10. Use mnemonic instruction.**

Mnemonics can be used to help pupils remember key information or steps in a learning strategy. (using the word BODMAS to remember the order of which mathematical calculations are done. B is for brackets, O is for Order, D is for division, M is for multiply, A is for add, S is for subtract.)



**11. Recap learning regularly.**

Daily review of previous learning or lessons can help pupils connect new information with prior knowledge.

## **SUPPORT INVOLVING PUPIL PERFORMANCE**

Pupils vary significantly in their ability to respond in different ways. For example, pupils vary in their ability to give oral presentations; participate in discussions; write letters and numbers; write paragraphs; draw objects; spell; work in noisy or cluttered settings; and read, write, or speak at a fast pace. Moreover, pupils vary in their ability to process information presented in visual or auditory formats. The following support involving mode of reception and expression can be used to enhance pupils' performance:

### **1. Change response method.**

For pupils who have difficulty with fine motor responses (such as handwriting), Vary the way they can answer questions - underlining, selecting from multiple choices, sorting, or marking. Pupils with fine motor problems should be given extra space for writing answers on worksheets or be allowed to respond on individual white boards.

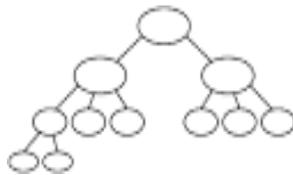
### **2. Provide an outline of the lesson/ activity.**

An outline enables some pupils to follow the lesson successfully and make appropriate notes. Moreover, an outline helps pupils to see the organisation of the material and ask relevant questions.

### **3. Encourage use of graphic organisers.**

A graphic organiser involves organising material into a visual format. To develop a graphic organiser, the pupil can use the following steps:

- (a) list the topic on the first line,
- (b) collect and divide information into major headings,
- (c) list all information relating to major headings on post its,
- (d) organise information into major areas,
- (e) place information under appropriate subheadings,
- (f) place information into the organiser format.

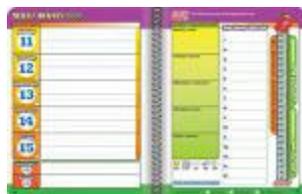


### **4. Place pupils close to the teacher.**

Pupils with attention problems can be seated close to the teacher, board, or work area and away from distracting sounds, materials, or objects.

### **5. Encourage use of school record books or calendars.**

Pupils can use a school record book to record homework and when it is due to be handed in, list school related activities, record test dates,



**6. Reduce copying by including information or activities on handouts or worksheets or screen shots from presentations**

**7. Use cues to highlight important items.**

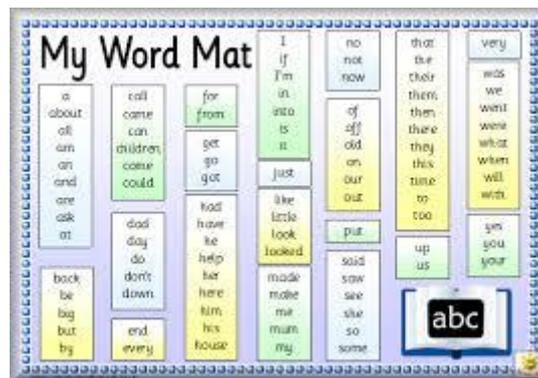
Asterisks or bullets can denote questions or activities that are important. This helps pupils spend time appropriately during tests or activities.

**8. Design hierarchical worksheets.**

The teacher can design worksheets with problems arranged from easiest to hardest. Early success helps pupils begin to work.

**9. Allow use of instructional aids.**

Pupils can be provided with letter and number strips to help them write correctly. Word mats for Literacy and topic lessons with words which the pupil can read. Number lines, counters, and calculators help pupils work out problems once they understand the mathematical operations. Use of lap tops or ipads to use as a word processor can help children.



**10. Display work samples.**

Samples of completed activities/ pieces of work can be displayed to help pupils realise expectations and plan accordingly.

**11. Use peer-mediated learning.**

The teacher can pair peers of different ability levels to review their notes, study for a test, read aloud to each other, write stories, or conduct laboratory experiments. Also, a partner can read math problems for pupils with reading problems to solve.



### **12. Encourage note sharing.**

A pupil can take notes and then share them with absentees and pupils with learning difficulties. This helps pupils who have difficulty taking notes to concentrate on what is being said rather than worrying about getting notes written down. Alternatively let children work together to take notes.



### **13. Use flexible work times.**

Pupils who work slowly can be given additional time to complete written assignments.



### **14. Provide additional practice.**

Pupils require different amounts of practice to master skills or content. Many pupils with learning difficulties need additional practice to learn at a fluency level.

### **15. Use homework/ activity/ project substitutions or adjustments.**

Pupils can be allowed to complete projects instead of oral reports or vice versa. Also, tests can be given in oral or written format. For example, if a pupil has a writing problem, the teacher can allow her or him to outline information and give an oral presentation instead of writing a paper. Or use a scribe.