

## General

Find out as much as you can about dyslexia so you understand your child's difficulties.

Dyslexia is not a disease. There is nothing wrong with you if you are dyslexic. Dyslexia just means that your brain works differently.

We all use our brains in different ways for different activities. One part is for reading and writing, another part is for making things, and another is for using your body. Dyslexia means that your brain doesn't work as well in the reading and writing part but it is probably better in other parts. Unfortunately, while you are at school, you will be using the reading and writing parts all the time. This means you will have to work harder and are likely to become more tired.

Dyslexia can cause problems with:	Dyslexics may be good at:
Memory	Creative ideas
Sequencing	Design
Attention / Concentration	Sometimes have good verbal skills (but cannot get it down on paper)
Spelling	Drama
Writing	Music
Reading	Art
Organisation	Visualising the whole thing spatially
Listening	
Maths (some are good at maths)	

Dyspraxia affects coordination. This can be small movements (fine motor), e.g. difficulty with handwriting, or big movements (large motor), e.g. throwing and balancing. Dyspraxia can also affect organisation, self-organisation, such as forgetting books, getting shoes on the wrong feet, putting clothes on backwards, and also the organisation of ideas into writing. Sentences can be muddled and written paragraphs can become confused and lack sequence. Dyspraxics have poor spatial awareness so they bump into things. They may also not start at the right place on a page or know where to use a full stop. They may also miss out spaces between words. They can be messy eaters, which is often a cause of embarrassment to them.

**develop listening skills**

1. Listen for sounds (musical notes, scrunching paper, shaking keys etc.)
2. Play 'Twister' or non-competitive direction games, e.g. take two steps to the left, one step back etc, or blindfold and give directions to find an object.
3. Play 'Simon Says'.
4. Play 'I Spy' (listening for beginning, end, and then middle sounds).
5. Play rhyming games ("what rhymes with...?").
6. Play games of 'What am I?', e.g. "I have six legs, I am black, I am small... an ant!"
7. Listen to stories on audio CD, then answer questions about them afterwards.

**develop memory for a sequence of heard information**

1. Clap or dance to different rhythms.
2. Repeat a story in the correct order. Repeat a series of words or numbers.
3. Follow a series of instructions, e.g. "go to the sofa, lift up a cushion, then go to the desk and open the top drawer" etc.  
This can be made into a 'search for treasure' game.
4. Copy tapped out rhythms.
5. Memory games such as "I went to the shops and bought..."

**develop visual skills**

1. Copy shapes and patterns.
2. Play 'matching games'.
3. Play drawing games - recognise a picture as it gradually develops.
4. Classification of objects and shapes.
5. Spot the difference.
6. Dot-to-dot. Completing a pattern.
7. Tracking. Buy large print books from car boot sales and choose a letter (e.g. 'a'). Scan each line from left to right, highlighting all examples of 'a' in a specified time, e.g. 1 minute, timed with a stopwatch. Parents do this activity at the same time, then swap books and check each other's work for missing letters. Please make sure that you miss some for your child to discover. Later, key words can be chosen, such as 'the' or 'and'.
8. Snap. Dominoes, starting with shapes and progressing to letters. Jigsaws.
9. 'Odd one out' games.

**develop visual sequential memory skills**

1. Reproduce simple patterns from memory.
2. Sequence pictures to tell a story. You can cut up old comic strips for this.
3. Lay a series of objects out in a line and look at them for a few seconds. Hide them and see if your child can remember them in the correct order. Children enjoy this if you start with something like small sweets. If they can remember them correctly, they can eat them! Later, you can introduce small, similar objects, and then use letters and numbers.
5. Mazes, dot-to-dot puzzles and simple word searches are also useful, but only use words which go horizontally, from left to right.

**reading**

1. Check vision with a qualified optometrist. Your child may need eye exercises or coloured lenses/overlays to prevent page 'glare'.
2. Use a card to help keep place. Sections can be cut from the card to minimise the amount of print being read at any one time, which prevents too much confusion.



3. Paired reading. Use a card to help keep place. Read with your child at bedtime and let him/her read parts to you. Hold your finger under the word being read. When he/she gets tired or comes to a hard passage or word, you take over. Try stopping at a very exciting stage so that they really want to know what comes next.
4. Choose fun books - comics and magazines are colourful and have short, manageable articles, so they may be more suitable for a child who has difficulty reading for a long period of time.

**spelling**

1. Use syllables for 'chunking' words. Show your child how easy it is to spell long words by breaking them into smaller parts.
3. Mnemonics and acronyms can be very helpful for learning small words, which do not follow a regular phonetic pattern, e.g. 'does **O**liver **e**at **s**weets?' for 'does'. The mnemonic should start with the word you are trying to learn, and should be accompanied by a drawing to reinforce memory. Use pictures to help recall.
4. Use ridiculous pronunciations, e.g. 'people (pee...opple)'.
5. Rhyme when you cannot remember how a word is spelt. Often dyslexics get sudden blanks and just cannot recall what a word looks like. This happens to us all but it happens more often to dyslexics. Rhyming words can often unlock the key to memory. Even if the word is misspelled it will be phonetically based so it can be understood.
6. Older students will find it helpful to learn to spell key subject words. Choose 6 - 8 words that are important to a particular subject they are studying. Put the words on a card and find a good way of learning them. You should aim to learn up to 6 per week.
7. Hand-held voice recorders can be very useful for senior students, particularly if they are slow to write, as they often forget what they intend to say because of the demands of the writing and spelling process.

**writing**

1. Use a white board, or a fridge door, with a dry-wipe marker pen for practising spellings.
2. If your child's handwriting is poor, start by using a large, fat crayon or white board pen, then gradually progress to paper. 5 minutes practice every night, counting the number of words written and keeping a graphical record, then giving a reward at the end of the week is a good, regular way to improve writing. Do not forget that writing can be used to make patterns, which can then be coloured in. Borders around drawings can be made in this way and often make interesting designs.
3. Give starting sentences and phrases to older students. Often, students have lots of ideas but do not know how to start. Once they have been given a starting sentence they can proceed.
4. Planning is important. Try mind mapping and then prioritise the points. Each point will become a paragraph.

**memory**

1. Name everything.
2. Have spares of everything - ready labelled.
3. Train your child to say things aloud - it helps recall.
4. Use sticky notes next to the phone. Teach your child to make drawings of information when someone calls. Doodling is much easier than writing.
5. Use visualisation techniques, if you have to remember a shopping list, such as eggs, cream, lettuce, etc. Imagine a fried egg on a bright green lettuce, and a thick frothy dollop of cream on the top. The picture will help recall.
6. Use fingers. Write information you wish to remember on the tip of each finger. One important word should summarise the information to be remembered.

**organisation**

1. Use a calendar and check it together every Sunday evening. Use a wall planner for showing the year's events by month.
2. Pin a school timetable on the back of the front door so you can see before leaving which books and equipment you should have in your bag.
3. Routine is important. Always pack bags the night before school/college. If you start this routine whilst your child is young, it is more likely to become a habit.
4. Lost items can sometimes be found if you practise retracing your steps aloud.
6. Smaller boxes can be put into drawers so that small items such as pants, socks etc, can have a place of their own. It makes dressing easier and it also teaches children to categorise.
7. When something has to be remembered during the school day, sticky tape the information or list on the inside lid of the school bag so your child will see it every time he/she opens the bag. Similarly, when going on trips, sticky tape a list of things in the bag so they can be checked off before leaving.
8. Tidy desks on a weekly basis so tidying remains manageable.
9. Colour code subject books and folders.