

A Parents Guide to Dyslexia



What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty that affects about 5% of the population, and mainly affects the skills involved in the reading and spelling of words.



Children with dyslexia have particular difficulties reading and writing words, usually from the time they start school. Some children complain that the words and letters tend to jump around on the page. The problems can cause dyslexic children to become frustrated, have low self-esteem, show poor concentration at school and fall behind their classmates in reading-based subject.

Even though dyslexia is classed as a learning difficulty, there is no connection between dyslexia and a child's intelligence. Children of all intellectual abilities, from low to high intelligence, can be affected by dyslexia. Dyslexia does not prevent high achievement – Leonardo de Vinci, Winston Churchill, Stephen Spielberg are just a few iconic examples!

How do I know if my child has dyslexia? What are the symptoms?

A child who has dyslexia may have also have had problems in earlier childhood with delayed speech or expressive language.

Symptoms of dyslexia in teenagers include:

- slow writing speed
- poorly organised written work which lacks expression: for example, even though an older child may be very knowledgeable about a certain subject, they may have problems expressing that knowledge in writing
- problems with reading fluency: reading fluency is the ability to read text smoothly, rapidly and automatically, without having to use any, or little, conscious effort

What can I do if I think my child has dyslexia?

Dyslexia can be inherited; about 40% of children with dyslexia will have an affected sibling or parent.

It is important that children with reading difficulties have a full eye test.



If you are concerned about your child's progress with reading and writing, first talk to their Form Tutor or someone in Learning Support. It may be that your child has health problems not connected to dyslexia that are affecting their ability to read or write. For example, they may have:

- vision problems, such as short-sightedness. Most children with dyslexia will have a completely normal eye examination
- impaired hearing, as the result of a condition such as glue ear

What if there are no underlying health problems?

It is unusual for a child to get to secondary school and not already be diagnosed with dyslexia. However, if you are concerned, email or arrange an appointment to see Mrs Gayle Raybould (SENCo) or Mrs Alexis Jones (Assistant SENCo) in Learning Support. They will then:

- contact your child's teachers to see if they have any concerns
- look at your child's writing and how they work in lessons

If your child's teachers or work in their lessons raises some concerns, the Learning Support Department can then arrange for your child to be tested.

If your child's teachers are not concerned, it may be necessary to contact their Head of House who can monitor their achievement more closely over a period of time and find out why they might be struggling..

What will the testing require my child to do?

If concerns are raised by your child's teachers, one of our qualified Learning Support teachers will test your child, if it is felt appropriate.

They will do a series of tests looking at the speed of their writing, how they process information and how they form written words and sentences. The results of the tests will be sent to you with any recommendations for support at home or in school. The testing can take a few weeks.

What might the recommendations include?

Severe dyslexia will already have been diagnosed before a child gets to secondary school and there will be appropriate support in place. If your child is diagnosed with dyslexia by the time they get to Tring School the school can do a variety of things to support your child depending on the severity of their dyslexia:

- Strategies and recommendations will be sent to their teachers about how best to support them in the classroom which include help with reading worksheets, organisations and writing at length
- Your child may be placed on the Special Educational Needs register. This means that all adults in school will be aware that your child has dyslexia and can support them appropriately
- Your child may be tested to see if they need support in examinations
- They may have some 1:1 support outside of the classroom with reading and writing
- Teaching Assistants may support your child in lessons along with other students in their class (please note that not all children with dyslexia get access to a Teaching Assistant)

What can I do to support my child at home?

Coloured overlays and tinted glasses have been proven to help children with dyslexia. Reading Rulers can be bought over the internet. The school has overlays that can be trialled.

Colorimetry (to determine the tint needed in glasses) is available at some Optometrists. There is some research evidence to support the use of tints in some children but, once again, vision and eye movement disorders should be excluded first.

Many older children with dyslexia feel more comfortable working with a computer than an exercise book. This may be because a computer uses a visual environment which corresponds more closely to their method of thinking.



Word processing programmes can also be useful because they have a spellchecker, and an auto-correct facility that can help to highlight mistakes in your child's writing.

Most web browsers and word processing software also have "text-to-speech" functions, or available "plug-ins", where the computer reads the text as it appears on the screen. Speech recognition software can also be used to translate what a person is saying into written text. This type of software can be useful for children with dyslexia because their language abilities are often better than their writing skills. The software can take a considerable amount of time and effort to use before it can be used with speed, but some children may find the effort worthwhile.

There are also many educational interactive software applications which may provide your child with a more engaging way of learning a subject, rather than simply reading from a textbook.

Children with dyslexia often do not like to read, but it should nevertheless be encouraged so that students get to recognise patterns of words and improve their language skills.

Reading aloud: tips for parents....

- Get your child to read aloud to you as often as possible. When your child reads correctly praise them often and specifically –when they read a sentence correctly, when they correct themselves after a mistake, when they remember a 'problem' word they've been working on, when they get a word correct after you have prompted them.
- When your child has difficulties with reading, you should pause and wait to give them a chance to tackle the problem. This pause should be as long as five seconds – count to ten under your breath.
- If your child reads incorrectly, if the word does not make sense you should prompt them with clues about the meaning of the text, e.g. 'You read....Does that make sense?' If the prompt does not elicit the correct response, you should provide it. If the mistake does make sense but is not the correct word you can prompt with clues about the look of the word, perhaps suggesting that they should



look again at individual letters or asking about a part of the word that is wrong.

- For long pauses when reading, you should suggest that they omit the word and read on to the end of the sentence, or read the sentence again. If the word is not correct after two prompts, you should supply the word and encourage your child to keep reading.

Discuss books with your child....

You will get better responses from your child if you:

- ask fewer and better questions
- encourage children to ask more questions
- Ask open ended questions that invite the child to think:

What do you think?

Why do you think that?

How can you be sure?

Is there another way/reason/idea?

What if..?

What do you think happens next?

What is happening in the picture?

What is the story about?

What do you most like or dislike about this story?

How do you think it will end?

What if my child is a reluctant reader?

A lot of children get out of the habit of reading by the time they get to secondary school, but it should be encouraged as much as possible at home. If your child is reluctant to pick up a book, get them to try:

- Audio books
- Graphic novels
- Comics and magazines



What strategies can be used to make reading easier for my child?

Encourage your child to use a reading method to suit the purpose of the task:

Accurate Reading

Needed when your child needs to understand something really well

- Read text twice
- Read one word at a time
- Highlight key words

HOWEVER...It can be a revelation to a child when he/she understands that he/she does not always have to read every word of the text.....!!

Skimming

A quick look to get the general idea

- Title
- Pictures and diagrams
- Headings
- Captions
- Bold type
- Beginning and end

Scanning for one bit of information. What will it look like?

- Capital letters?
- First letter?
- Length of word?
- Numbers?
- Patterns of letters?

Interactive Reading

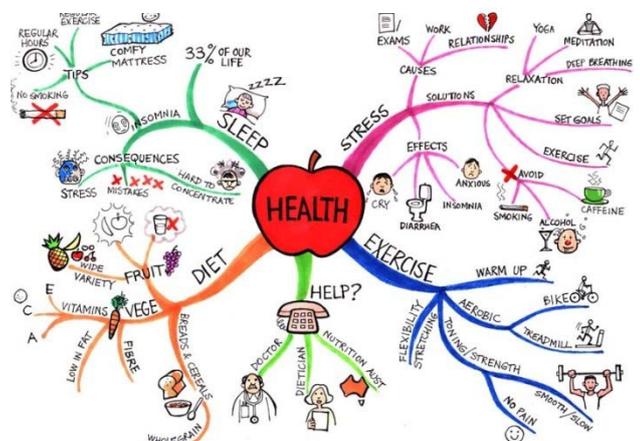
Can be used to help your child understand and remember what he/she reads.

RAP

- Read the information
- Ask 'What is it all about?'
- Put it into your own words

Make text memorable

- Make it colourful (highlight)
- Use headings
- Use sub-headings
- Write key words
- Make a diagram, chart, poster or mind map



What if my child has problems with spelling?

When spelling High Frequency Words:

- Use rainbow writing – write over the word in different coloured pens, pencils, crayons, etc. Your child should say each letter name out loud as he/she writes it, and the whole word each time he/she completes the word.
- Write in different media, e.g. sand, sugar
- Use simple mnemonics, e.g. for 'said' – save animals in danger
- Find words in words, e.g. 'hospital'
- Say the word as it is spelt, e.g. 'fri-end'
- Visualise (make a mental picture) of the word
- Make a spelling game:
 - Decide on six different ways to write the words, .e.g. best handwriting, with left (or right) hand, using a special pen/pencil, on sandpaper, with eyes closed, on mum's back, on a 'magic slate', etc. Assign each a number. Child rolls the dice and spells the target word in the manner linked to that number.

What if they can't spell a word?

- Try using phonic strategies. Say the word and segment the phonemes. Split a longer word into syllables e.g. cu-cum-ber
- Think about the words that sound the same. Can they use what they know about similar words e.g. could-would-should
- Write the word with as many letters as they can think of, underline it and then go back to it later
- Create spelling logs, word banks and displays and put them up in the bedroom



My child hates homework. How can I support them with it?

All children hate homework, not just the dyslexic children!!

General tips:

- Establish a predictable routine
- Allow 'down time'

- Allow your child to have some control over the time homework is done
- Find a quiet place and make sure pens and paper are readily Available
- Make sure your child understands what he has to do. Talk through the task.
- When helping your child, keep your explanation as simple and practical as possible
- Be realistic. Set a time frame for each subject. If set homework is not completed in time allowed, send a note to school explaining how much time has been spent on task
- Help your child to prioritise homework. Encourage him/her to tackle the hardest homework first
- Break it down into manageable chunks
- Negotiate with the class teacher about whether you can scribe for your child at home. Can the work be word processed or presented in an alternative format such as a spider diagram? Can you act as scribe?
- Encourage your child to check his/her homework after a short break
- Once homework is completed, look at completed assignment together – each find 3 good things and 2 things that could be improved next time.

