

Dyslexia

A miniature guide



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What is dyslexia?

- A Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD) that causes problems with reading, writing and spelling.
- Unlike a learning disability, intelligence is not affected.
- It is a very common difficulty, with possibly up to 1 in 10 people in the UK having some degree of dyslexia.
- It often appears to run in families.

Here are some of the traits people with dyslexia may share:

Signs of Dyslexia in the Early Years

A child might find it hard to:

- Sit still and pay attention
- Learn nursery rhymes
- Learn the alphabet
- Follow two or more instructions at one time
- Keep a simple beat or rhythm
- Remember names of people or objects
- Discriminate between sounds
- Follow directional words
- Sequence events and patterns



Of course, many young children can display any of these signs, but it is the persistence and severity of the behaviours that might give clues to point to dyslexia

It is important to identify problems as soon as possible and to be able to offer help at an early stage

Diagnostic assessments for dyslexia are usually only carried out from the age of 7

Signs of dyslexia in primary-aged children

General

- Slow processing in spoken and/or written language
- Poor concentration
- Difficulty following instructions
- Forgetting words

Reading

- Slow reading progress
- Difficulty in blending letters
- Difficulty recognising syllables
- Unusual pronunciation
- Lack of expression when reading aloud
- Losing place when reading and seeing distorted word shapes
- Confusing high frequency words e.g. was/saw
- Poor comprehension of own reading
- Very hesitant when reading aloud
- Misses out or adds extra words
- Cannot recognise familiar words

Writing

- Messy work
- Writing poorly set out, e.g. not using a margin
- Confusion with similar looking letters e.g. b/d, n/u, m/w
- Poor handwriting with badly formed letters and reversals
- Different spelling of the same word in one piece of writing
- Discrepancy between oral and written work
- Makes anagrams of words, e.g. lake/leak, note/tone
- Has an unusual or poor pencil grip
- Uses phonetic spellings that are not age-appropriate
- Frequent errors when copying from the board



Other indicators

- A 'spiky' profile – i.e. strong abilities alongside areas of weakness
- Difficulty learning to tell the time
- Difficulty remembering the day of the week, recalling months and seasons
- Difficulty with concepts of time – yesterday, today, tomorrow
- Poor personal organisation
- Confused by directions such as left and right
- Uses avoidance tactics in the classroom, such as excessively sharpening pencils
- Seems to daydream
- Is easily distracted
- Can be the class clown or generally disruptive
- Gets easily tired due to the concentration and effort required
- Low levels of motivation and self-esteem



Is dyslexia more common in males?

Dyslexia appears to be more common in males than females, but this is an area of contention. There may be differences in male and female dyslexic brains that partly account for why there are many more males diagnosed. However, there is also the argument that boys are more likely to 'act out' if they are experiencing difficulties, whereas girls might be more likely to try to hide it.

Co-morbidities

- **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)** This is the most common neurodevelopmental condition to occur alongside dyslexia.
- **Other specific learning disorders**, such as dysgraphia, dyscalculia and dyspraxia/DCD
- **Developmental language disorder (DLD) or specific language impairment (SLI)**
- **Anxiety**
- **Autism (ASD)**



What support strategies can be used?

Teach syllable counting.	Teach how to blend syllables.
Teach how to discriminate between words aurally.	Teach phoneme discrimination to help pupils identify phonemes in words.
Teach phoneme blending.	Use multi-sensory methods to support learning.
Ensure repetition of learning using word and language games.	Make use of coloured overlays and line trackers where necessary.
Create a positive reading environment with opportunities to listen to stories.	Sing songs and listen to/recite rhymes and poems as often as possible.
Make use of audio-visual aids.	Keep oral instructions brief and clear.
Raise self-esteem and confidence with praise and encouragement.	Encourage alternative methods of recording.

What resources are most useful?

Reading windows and overlays

Reading overlays are small sheets of transparent coloured plastic that can help reduce visual distortions and discomfort when reading. They work by reducing the contrast between the text and the background and can improve fluency and reading comfort. The most effective colour to use varies from person to person, so it's good to offer a choice.

Reading windows help by blocking out extra text, making it easier to focus on a few words or sentences at a time.



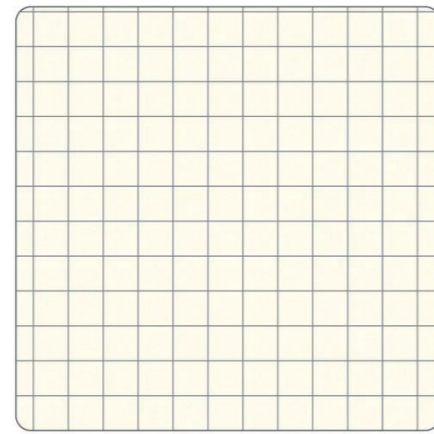
Stile

Stile has been around for many years but can still be a useful and motivating tool. It is self-checking and therefore can be used independently and with less stress for some children. Pupils answer questions and put the appropriate tile in the base of the tray. When all the tiles have been placed, they turn it over to reveal a geometric pattern. If all the answers are correct, the pattern will match the one printed on the top of the page. There are 10 books in the Stile Dyslexia range.



Tinted paper and exercise books

Tinted paper can reduce strain on the eyes and make reading and writing more enjoyable.



7mm squares

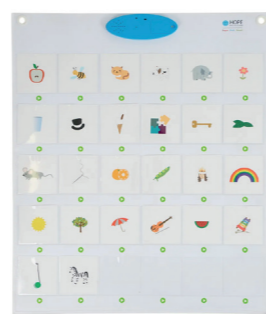
Multi-sensory letters

Adding touch, colour and movement makes it easier for children to understand and retain information. Manipulating letters can help to reinforce letter-sound associations and word formation in an enjoyable way.



Recordables

Recordable resources offer many opportunities for multi-sensory engagement and support the development of spoken and written language.



Sentence builders

Colour-coded, manipulative resources are brilliant for helping children's understanding of sentence structure. They provide a fun way to practise the important skill of sentence building without necessarily having to write.



Rhyming activities

Children with dyslexia often have difficulty with phonological skills, including the ability to recognise and generate rhymes. Repeated exposure to songs and rhymes is beneficial, as are resources which allow consistent practise in pairing rhyming words.



Scanning pens

Scanning pens allow text to be read aloud and can be an invaluable aid for anyone facing challenges in reading.



Other Considerations

Readable texts

- Use sans serif fonts, i.e. fonts that do not have serifs (small lines) added to them. This makes letters appear clearer and therefore easier to read. Examples include Comic Sans, Arial, Verdana and Calibri.
- Use font sizes of at least 12-14 (some people prefer larger).
- Spacing between words should be very clear.
- Avoid underlining and italics as this can make the text appear too crowded. Embolden for emphasis.
- Lower case letters are easier to read, so avoid using capital letters in continuous text.

Headings

- For headings, use a font size that is at least 20% larger than the normal text. If further emphasis is required, then use bold.
- Add extra space around headings and between paragraphs.

Colour

- Use single colour backgrounds. Avoid background patterns or pictures.
- Use cream or a soft pastel colour rather than white backgrounds for paper, computer and visual aids such as whiteboards.
- Use dark coloured text on a light (but not white) background making sure there is enough contrast between the background and the text.
- Avoid green, red and pink as these colours can be difficult for those who have colour vision deficiencies.
- Use matt paper rather than gloss when printing or copying.

Writing style and Layout

- Use short simple sentences: 60 to 70 characters is optimal. (Similar to this sentence!)
- Break up text with headings.
- Write in simple clear language.
- Use images to support text. Pictures can be very helpful to locate and support information.
- Use bullet points and numbering where possible rather than blocks of text.
- Avoid abbreviations and always provide the expanded form when first used.

Helpful contacts and further information

The British Dyslexia Association

www.bdadyslexia.org.uk

Dyslexia UK

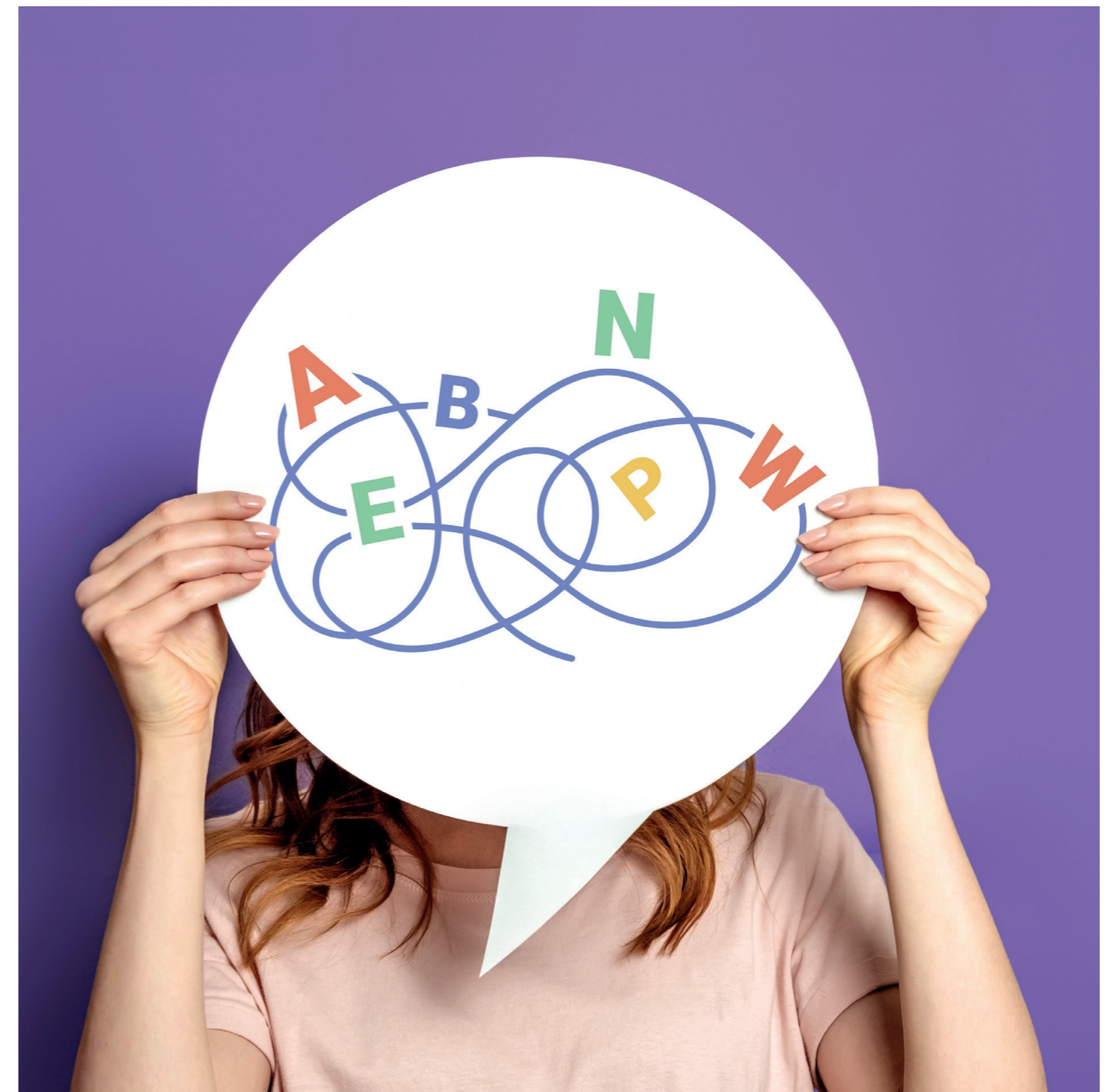
www.dyslexia.uk.net

NHS

www.nhs.uk/conditions/dyslexia

Dyslexia Research Trust

www.dyslexic.org.uk



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