

Supporting Dyslexic Learners in the Classroom

Dyslexic learners often have problems processing information quickly, manipulating information in their working memory and storing information in their long term memory. They may also have significant problems spelling, reading and writing.

There are many skills that we take for granted, such as:

Copying information from a leaflet

Calculating the cost of our groceries quickly in a shop

Following directions from verbal instructions

Writing down a phone number which someone is giving verbally

It's essential to put ourselves in the learner's position in order to have empathy, understanding and ultimately work effectively together to ensure that the learning is accessible to all.

Practical Ways to Support Dyslexic Students in Lessons



➤ Verbal instructions:

- Give them one at a time.
- Have series of instructions written down/on board for pupils to refer to.
- Prepare a reduced version of text.
- Find a simpler text.
- Provide a glossary.



➤ Change the whiteboard background to a colour:

- Pupils can find black on white makes letters blurry/ makes lines fuse into one another/ letters slide down page etc. and it helps (and can sometimes SOLVE this issue) to change the background - blue seems to work particularly well.

➤ **Think about the presentation of teaching and learning**

- Pre teach key words.
- Allow learners to show what they know in a variety of ways, e.g. mind-map, bullet points, on a white board.
- Avoid extensive copying.
- Create cloze sheets.
- Drawing grids etc. can be REALLY difficult to complete for those with poor motor skills. Unless that is the focus of the task/assessment, provide the grid.
- Teach planning skills (from spider diagrams to linear plans in paragraphs).
- A blank piece of paper is often very daunting. Create templates for pupils to work through an activity.
- Break big questions into smaller steps.
- Promote how to skim and scan when reading a text (Skim = general info – Scan = searching for key words/information).



➤ **Help learners organise ideas:**

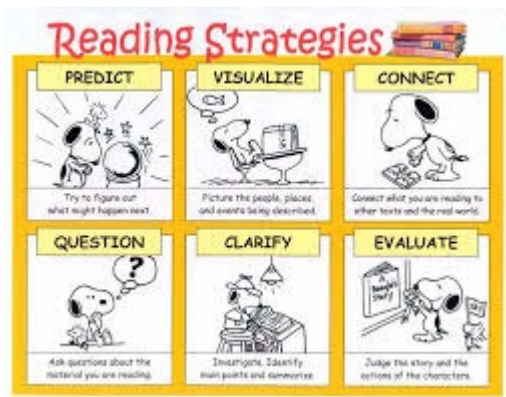
- Use dialogue and discussion.
- Promote certain habits of mind: inquiry, critical examination, questioning, imagining, metacognition etc.
- Work collaboratively to discover and explore subject matter – promote the classroom as a learning community.
- Use mind maps, semantic webs, graphic organisers, topic sentences, Venn diagrams, sentence building, comparison writing frames.
- Value consistent practise of *skills* over concern for a ‘finished’ piece.
- Encourage visualisation, metaphors, and analogies.

- Use computer software (text to talk feature on word, reading pens, mindmap apps etc).
- Praise and promote the *process* and through this, evaluate their ideas and knowledge.



➤ **Help learners consolidate their learning by:**

- Overlearning – won't be recalled otherwise (games, tests, regular homework).
- Making links between previous learning and new.
- Making learning as 'active' as possible with opportunities for the learner to 'discover' the learning for themselves.
- Emphasising conceptual understanding over rote learning – *what we do and why*.
- Creating kinaesthetic and visual representations of the learning – eg: solving a problem by physically manipulating concrete objects.
- Asking pupils to explain and describe their learning to another pupil.
- Developing self-belief and reducing anxiety.
- Binding to long term memory by teaching new learning points in conjunction with multi-sensory inputs.
- Revisiting old learning and recreating it in a new form.
- Providing self-check answer lists so learners can 'discover' their mistakes and seek to remedy.
- Providing top ten topic vocabulary or subject specific words. NB: **It's not just the obvious topic words, it can be other words that can cause huge confusion, indent, proof read, assessment focus, text, punctuation etc.*
- Find time to talk to those with difficulties – ask them how you can help.



➤ **Promote active reading strategies:**

- Highlight key information / words
- Predict
- Empathise
- Summarise
- Question
- Visualise
- Make connections: events, themselves, places, feelings , other literature / situations
- Recreate in pictures



➤ **Homework:**

- Give out homework at the beginning of the lesson, those pupils who are slow writers, poor copiers (due to poor spelling/poor motor skills), disorganised etc. can have plenty of time to get it down – they are not rushing at the end to pack and get out. Plus, you can explain it later in the lesson.
- Encourage learners to: set reasonable time limits for completing homework; break the work down and understand the tasks; estimate how long each section will take.
- Show / describe an example of a finished piece.



➤ **Encourage metacognition:**

- *How difficult is this task?*
- *What helps me?*
- *Do I need to ask for something to be repeated or clarified?*
- *What did I do last time?*
- *How might I teach it to someone else?*
- *How can I approach it differently next time?*