

A Quick Guide to Dyslexia

For teachers, SENCos and families

What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a set of processing difficulties that affect the acquisition of reading and spelling. Phonological processing, orthographic processing, working memory and processing speed can influence how it presents. However, the precise pattern differs from one pupil to another. Dyslexia exists on a continuum, so two dyslexic pupils in the same classroom may have very different strengths and needs.

What this may look like in the classroom

Spoken instructions	Losing track during a sequence of instructions or a task with several steps.	Sequencing	Difficulty recalling the alphabet, times tables, days of the week or the order of events.
Sound and letter links	Taking longer to secure links between letters and their corresponding sounds.	Place keeping	Repeating or skipping words, lines or numbers when reading or copying.
Written expression	Losing an idea while concentrating on spelling, handwriting or sentence construction.	Reading for meaning	Working so hard to decode words that the overall meaning becomes difficult to retain.
Organisation	Difficulty organising equipment, written work or information copied from the board.	Effort and attention	Reduced concentration, fatigue or frustration during literacy-heavy activities.

Remember: These signs may have several explanations. Classroom observation and a graduated response should guide the next steps.



How to help: practical strategies

Small and consistent adjustments can make a meaningful difference. Support should respond to need and does not require a diagnosis.

01 Make instructions manageable Break information into short steps. Check understanding before moving on.	06 Reduce unnecessary copying Provide dates, success criteria, key vocabulary and longer passages in printed or digital form.
02 Scaffold written work Use writing frames, prompt sheets, worked examples or cue cards.	07 Preserve the challenge Reduce repetition or task volume rather than lowering the intended learning outcome.
03 Build secure learning Use short and repeated practice. Revisit learning over time rather than relying on one long session.	08 Allow appropriate time Allow additional classroom time where needed. Formal exam arrangements must follow current regulations and the pupil's normal way of working.
04 Match the reading demand Choose material at the pupil's current reading level. Preserve the age appropriateness of the topic.	09 Teach using several routes Combine seeing, hearing, saying and doing when this supports the learning goal.
05 Prepare for reading aloud Allow rehearsal and avoid unexpected public reading where this may cause distress.	10 Listen to the pupil Ask what helps. Record the strategies used and review their impact over time.

Dyslexia may occur alongside other needs Dyslexia may co-occur with developmental language disorder, dyscalculia, ADHD or developmental co-ordination disorder. These are distinct profiles and should not be assumed from dyslexia alone.	When a diagnostic assessment may help An assessment can clarify a pupil's pattern of strengths and difficulties. It may provide evidence to inform support, although it does not guarantee an EHC plan or an exam arrangement. Defining Dyslexia provides diagnostic assessments from age 8 through a specialist teacher assessor who is registered with PATOSS and holds a current Assessment Practising Certificate.
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Further support

Defining Dyslexia: assessment and support	PATOSS: professional information and assessor standards	IPSEA: independent SEND legal information
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For local assessment, provision and support pathways, also consult your local authority's SEND Local Offer.

