

English and dyslexia

As a subject English demands and expects accuracy in reading, writing and spelling. It measures competency in written language skills. The study of English literature needs sensitive and careful handling for the dyslexic student to derive enjoyment from studying the great literary works and to access age and ability appropriate literature.

Factors to take into account and characteristics of some dyslexic students which will affect learning	Effect on learning in the English classroom. Students may have difficulty with the following	Strategies which may be incorporated into classroom teaching	Additional support which may be needed
Memory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working memory (the ability to hold and juggle information in short-term memory) – if overloaded, information may be lost May be inaccurate representations in long-term memory. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remembering and carrying out instructions Remembering recently-learned vocabulary Repeating multisyllabic words May know the answer but cannot verbalise it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present new information in small chunks Set limited but realistic targets Make learning multisensory – use music, actions, graphics Allow plenty of time for recall. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide support materials to be used at home or with teaching assistants.
Sequencing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Putting things in order – alphabet, letter order in words, word order in sentences, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding words in a dictionary Ordering days of the week, months, numerical data, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow for frequent practice using rhyme, rhythm, games, songs, etc. Have charts, lists of vocabulary, diagrams, etc. on display in the classroom. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make use of e-learning tools such as spelling and word checkers Encourage the use of memory strategies such as mnemonics.

Speed of information processing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slower in responding to incoming information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responding to information or instructions Understanding and responding to a continuous flow of information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow extra time for processing by slowing down presentation Allow student extra time to answer questions and complete work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply for extra time or other special arrangements in national tests.
Visual discrimination/perception <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor ability to discriminate/differentiate between words/similar shaped letters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Differentiating between similar-looking words Problems with correct punctuation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make use of picture cards for association Use colour highlighting for word patterns, suffixes, prefixes, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use e-learning tools such as a Language Master to aid learning of common words and words which are easily confused.
Auditory discrimination/perception <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficulty in perceiving the difference between similar sounds Difficulty identifying sounds Problems identifying where one spoken word ends and a new word begins. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Problems knowing if a sound is correct when repeating after a teacher Recognising the difference between two words containing similar sounds Listening tasks Answering oral questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide text and sound together Exaggerate word separation at first and then as it would be spoken normally. 	

<p>Phonological processing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak sound/symbol correspondence • Lack of awareness of individual sounds within words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pronunciation, even of words encountered quite frequently • Recognising familiar words and phrases • Confusion of similar-sounding words • Reading, especially reading aloud. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an early introduction to the phonic system • Make sure new material is introduced in a multisensory way – show it, listen to it, look at it, hear it, say it, write it • Only ask the student to read aloud if readily volunteers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use practice cards for reinforcement • Use tapes to accompany printed materials • Pair the student with a good reader wherever possible.
<p>Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affected by weak working memory and thus lose meaning • May be slow • Reading without expression • Difficulty reading aloud. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coping with the amount of reading required • Unable to decode words quickly • Remembering what has been read • Selecting important areas to read • Skimming and scanning for information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not assume or presume that students 'know' what style of reading is required for different tasks • Teach what type of reading is required for different things such as exam questions, reading for gleaning facts, for specific information, for general overviews, for pleasure • Encourage use of line markers to help keep place: rulers, Perspex® strips, rule a line on an A5 sheet of overhead transparency and use as a guide. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use ICT, video and cover-to-cover audio tapes to support and limit the amount of reading which may be required.

<p>Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handwriting may be slow • May be difficult to read • Letter formation may be inaccurate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copying from the board • Writing down what can be produced orally. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide written notes or cloze (gapped) exercises rather than expect the student to copy from the board • Limit the amount of written work required • Allow the use of wordprocessing if writing is illegible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow the student to present work in other formats such as taped or wordprocessed • Provide photocopies of notes with tapes to be practised at home.
<p>Spelling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty remembering what a word looks like • Lack of knowledge of spelling conventions • Linked to phonological processing difficulties. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words spelled in different ways in the same piece of text • Words spelled phonetically • All the right letters there but in the wrong order. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage use of personal dictionaries • Help students to find ways of remembering spellings – mnemonics, words within words, base words and suffixes, etc. • Highlight the part of the word which is causing difficulty and use visual clues to help reduce the load on memory • Encourage and accept logical spelling if accuracy is not possible • Do not cover a student's book with red corrections identifying each and every spelling mistake. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support to reinforce spellings – target word sheets with strategies for spelling • Provide or recommend dictionaries with coloured main words or try Moseley's ACE dictionary (Aurally Coded Dictionary 1995) which gives access to a spelling dictionary through aural means • Mark spelling within a whole-school policy which takes into account dyslexic difficulties and gives consistency of expectations.

<p>Grammar/syntax</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor understanding of syntax and grammar. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty forming accurate sentences • Difficulty understanding what a paragraph is/looks like • Problems with the rules of grammar • Difficulty understanding and using the vocabulary associated with English literature. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach rules and build in lots of reinforcement within the lesson • Use diagrams, cards, etc. to show sequences and patterns of language • Draw the concepts, e.g. draw what a paragraph looks like • Teach vocabulary associated with literature explicitly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide revision cards with rules for use as reference in class and at home.
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<p>Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tasks – weak grasp of time required • Writing – tendency to ‘lose the plot’. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and allocating time to complete tasks • Planning a revision schedule • Planning writing tasks to include all information and not wander from the subject/title • Following the plot/story line. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use planning calendars to work backwards from the hand-in dates to show when work should be done • Use writing scaffolds to support planning • Point out underlying themes, encourage the use of ideas/concept maps to plan and see the overview and interrelationships of characters • Discuss and explore the characters, plots, themes and atmosphere verbally • Use drama activities to develop empathy and a deeper moral understanding of the piece of literature • Make sure students are aware of the marking criteria as a helpful stimulus for re-drafting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide writing scaffolds to support independent work
<p>Directionality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tendency to confuse left/right, up/down, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • following and giving instructions • following instructions which rely on prepositions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide symbols/pictures/arrows as well as text • Provide visual clues wherever possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pair the students with someone who can support them in this.

It is important to recognise that, although the dyslexic student may have difficulties in many areas, there will be areas of strength. Recognising and utilising these strengths is important to the student's academic and intellectual development. These strengths are important to the self-esteem of the dyslexic student.

As with the areas of possible difficulty listed above, dyslexia is very diverse and some strengths will be found in some students and not in others.

Factors to take into account and characteristics of some dyslexic students which will affect learning	Recognising these talents within the classroom
Creativity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A high degree of curiosity • Ability to concentrate intensely and for a long period of time on something they are interested in • May have excellent spatial skills – the ability to perceive and interact with three-dimensional space • Can think abstractly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for strengths • Notice areas of interest • Provide a wide variety of activities • Talk with the students about what they like to do • Ask parents about a student's interests and talents • Ask other teachers about the strengths they have noticed.
Problem solving <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to think 'outside the box' • To see other ways of approaching the problem • To visualise a solution • Ability to see patterns in seemingly unrelated data. 	
Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good social abilities • Enthusiasm • Willingness to take risks • Willingness to work hard • A strong sense of humour • Empathy with others • Good observational skills. 	Nurturing these talents within the classroom. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise them • Provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their talents within the classroom • Utilise the talents within literacy and numeracy tasks – work to the interests, e.g. football – write game reports, produce league tables, train

Verbal skills <ul style="list-style-type: none">• May be good at communicating verbally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• or bus timetable to get to away matches, etc.• Provide opportunities to discover and create new interests and talents.
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