

Dyslexia and your child

Information for parents of school age children



Some Indicators

General:

- Family history of dyslexia or difficulties with reading and writing.
- Did not crawl.
- Speech late developing.
- Problems dressing/undressing (may still put clothes on the wrong way round), throwing a ball, riding a bike etc.
- Muddles words eg 'cumbumber' or can't think of names for familiar objects or people.
- Likes listening to stories or looking at books, but has no interest in letters or words.
- Difficulty remembering or following more than simple instructions, or slow to process what is heard.
- History of ear infections/glue ear (this may cause phonological difficulties).
- Tires easily; becomes frustrated with reading or writing tasks.
- Difficulty remembering sequences – days of week, alphabet, tables etc, left/right confusion; poor concept of time.
- Fine or gross motor difficulties.
- Good and bad days – knows something one day but not the next.
- Forgets things not practised regularly.



Reading:

- Reluctance to read (out loud) or does not read for pleasure.
- Misses out words, loses place.
- Confuses similar looking letters eg b/d, n/u, m/w, i/j etc.
- Misreads common words or confuses similar looking words (on/no)
- Slow, non-fluent reading, may sound out most words.
- Limited understanding of what is read.

i was the bog or I saw the dog?

Writing:

- Good ideas but cannot get them on paper.
- Poor handwriting, badly set out, badly formed letters, not joining.
- Poor spelling, limited punctuation.
- Difficulty organising ideas in writing.

Maths:

- Confuses or reverses similar numbers eg 6/9, 19/90, 37/73 etc.
- Difficulty remembering sequences such as tables and processes.
- Poor memory may affect mental maths.
- Misreads signs or cannot read instructions.



Supporting Reading at Home

- Let your child read anything that they enjoy – ‘easy’ books help to build confidence, ‘difficult’ books may be at their interest level. Comics and magazines are fine.
- Share or read to them difficult books of their choice. Read with expression and not too fast.
- Have plenty of reading material around the home and let him see you enjoying reading.
- From the title and illustrations, talk about what might be in the book or the story line.
- Keep your child interested by asking ‘What do you think might happen? Why did they do that?, What would you do?’ etc.
- Judge how much time to spend reading by your child’s reaction.
- Tracking with a finger or ruler helps some children who lose their place.
- If he hesitates on a word you think he won’t know, read it for him.
- If he hesitates on a word you think he can work out (eg easy words like ‘hat, stopping’ etc) encourage him to sound it out and try. He may need to reread the whole sentence (or do it together) to pick up on the meaning.
- Sometimes missing out the tricky word and reading to the end of the sentence helps.
- Don’t get cross if he can’t read an ‘easy’ word or one he has read before. He is probably just as frustrated as you!
- Breaking longer words into parts or syllables can help eg con den sa tion.

- Give praise for effort, self-correcting, trying unknown words, realising when it doesn't make sense etc.
- Play games and do other activities that involve reading (see separate sheet).
- And finish on a positive note!

Supporting Spelling at Home.

- Be aware of 2 types of words – those that are regular and can be sounded out and built up; those that are irregular and need to be learnt or looked up/checked. 80% of English spelling is regular.
- It is easier to learn regular words in 'families' so that links are seen eg can, man, fan, light, bright, fighting etc. Highlight the part that is always the same. Talk about prefixes (bits that go on the beginning eg 'dis' dislike) and suffixes (bits that are added at the end eg 'ing' 'er'). Generally, the main word stays the same.
- Irregular, tricky words need to be learnt individually. Make up mnemonics (see later), highlight the tricky bit (they), provide checklists, practise one at a time regularly. Say letter names (not sounds) when practising these words.



- However, there are rules which help some children as they get older eg if you add a suffix to a short word that ends in a vowel and a consonant, you double the consonant eg run, running, runner.

- Children are taught to listen to the sounds they hear in regular words and then make a spelling choice eg sh ee p (3 sounds). The difficult bit is that the sound 'ee' can be written in other ways ('ea' as in 'team' or e-e as in 'eve'). A child who spells 'sheep' is aware of the sounds whereas a child who spells 'shep' is not.
- Once a child is aware of sounds, using a spellchecker is more effective.
- Practise writing individual words in cursive if your child has already learnt this.
- Multi sensory is best – hear it, say it, see it, do it. Use colour, write in sand, make with playdoh, use magnetic letters etc.

General Support at Home

Some children with dyslexia are poorly organised and will need your help.

- Have a copy of the timetable pinned up so that you and your child know which day PE takes place, which day the spelling test is etc.
- Provide a smallish pencil case (see-through can be good) with the basics and spares at home as things will get lost.
- Find out what works best for your child to write with and provide this.
- Velcro fastenings/zips can be easier.
- Name everything.
- Have a set place for school bag, school letters etc and check the night before.
- Check bag/pockets for notes from school, as they probably won't remember to tell you.
- Try to get them to have a good breakfast.
- For older children, encourage the use of a PC for written work and help them to develop efficient keyboard skills. The BBC website has a good, free programme – Dance Mat.
- Help them to remember by using strategies eg repeating verbally, making pictures in their head, lots of revision.
- Help them to learn to tell the time using a clock with numbers, counting up in 5s.



- Provide a calendar so that they can see days, weeks passing and when special days occur.
- Whatever the difficulties, try not to be over anxious as this will impact on your child. Discuss concerns with the school. Dyslexia groups can offer good support eg SESDA (S E Surrey Dyslexia Association).

Homework

Some tips on how to avoid a nightmare as homework is probably something they would rather not do.

- Try to establish a routine of what works best for you.
- Getting started is often the most difficult bit and when they need your help the most. Soon after they get home can be best.
- Find out from school how much is a reasonable time to spend and stick to this.
- Read worksheets with/for them and help them to verbalise what they want to say. If writing is a big issue, scribe for them.
- Have the phone number of a class buddy so that you can find out what the homework entails if your child is unsure.
- Supply Post-Its to mark important bits, things to revise, remember etc.
- If it is not a spelling exercise, tell your child unknown words if asked.
- Be encouraging and praise for effort.
- Provide drinks, snacks, fun breaks, rewards.



Activities and Games

Children are often quite happy to do things if it does not seem like 'work'!

- Cooking including weighing etc.
- DIY including measuring etc.
- Playing board and card games.
- Making lists, shopping.



- Use magnetic letters on the fridge or a baking tray (1 of each in a rainbow arc). Use to build or read back regular words.
- Make cards with irregular, sight words written on them to play Pelmanisn/Pairs or Snap etc.
- Make a grid of some of these words and see how many can be read in a minute. Then try to beat that time.
- Use playing cards 1-9 to play Pairs to help secure number bonds to 10.
- If your child prefers to be active, write some of these words on to paper or card, call one out and he jumps on it, or reads them as he jumps on them.
- Count in 2s, 5s, 10s etc to music, while dancing, clapping – anything that helps.
- Draw pictures and make up mnemonics to help with spelling of tricky words eg because – big elephants can always upset small elephants, said – six ants in danger.