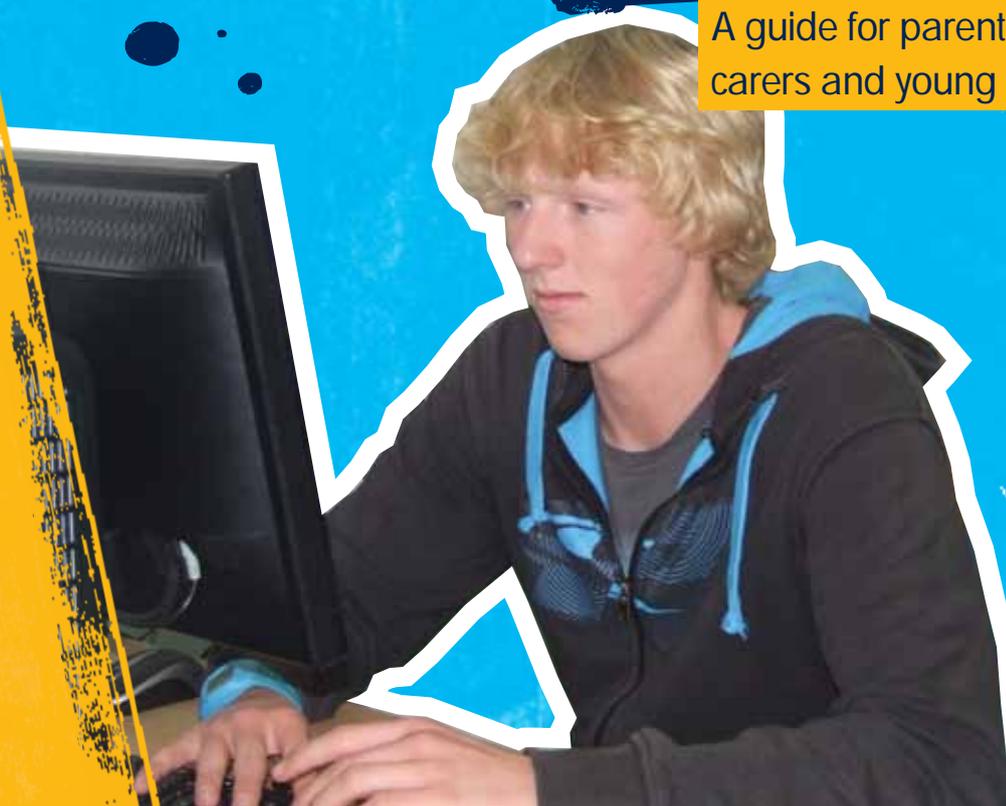


Parent
Champions

Empowering Parents and Carers

Understanding dyslexia

A guide for parents,
carers and young people



Note to parents and carers

Finding out your child has dyslexia can be an overwhelming experience or in many cases a huge relief to finally understand why your child has been struggling.

This guide has been written by a group of young people and their parents. It has been specifically designed to help you and your child gain a better understanding of dyslexia and how it may affect them. It includes useful help, advice and information.

It has been produced as part of the Parent Champions initiative, a national project created by the Dyslexia-SpLD Trust. Parent Champions is a network of parents and carers of children and young people with dyslexia, who are passionate about helping others in their local community with dyslexia and specific learning difficulties. They are supported by the Dyslexia-SpLD Trust in accessing reliable information and resources. It aims to empower and inform parents and carers so that they have the confidence to make the best choices for their children.

- **Communication** can create understanding
- **Understanding** can nurture support
- **Support** can make the positive change which can, make all the difference



Understanding Dyslexia

A guide for parents and carers

“As soon as my son was identified as dyslexic there was a sense of relief. We had some understanding of dyslexia but now we had a reason to find out more. Our son was 7 1/2 and for him it was a relief because he thought he had something seriously wrong with him. As parents we had to really look hard for information, but we were lucky that the school was really good, but we still felt we did not have enough information and a guide like this one would have been really helpful.” Alison

“This guide will be really useful for secondary students and parents if their children haven’t been previously identified with dyslexia. It will be good to know that they are not alone and because dyslexia



is so individual to every young person it will be helpful to others in a similar situation.”

“We wanted to be involved in writing this guide in order to help other parents with practical and simple information that would be a first step to understanding and give useful references for further resources and support.” Trina

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What is dyslexia?

"Dyslexia is a learning difficulty (or difference) that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling.

- Dyslexia occurs across a range of intellectual ability.*
- Additional difficulties may be seen in aspects of language, motor coordination, mental calculation, concentration and personal organisation.*
- Dyslexia is on a continuum.*
- A good indication of the severity and persistence of dyslexic difficulties can be gained by examining how the individual responds to well informed intervention."*

(Sir Jim Rose Identifying and teaching children with dyslexia and literacy difficulties 2009).

Having dyslexia can mean that certain aspects of learning may be more difficult than others. It can also mean that part of learning may be easier.

Young people with dyslexia might struggle with some of the following:

- Reading fluently and accurately, and understanding what they are reading
- Handwriting
- Spelling
- Getting ideas down on paper
- Speech and language
- Maths; times tables, remembering formulae, algebra, telling the time
- Remembering instructions
- Processing information quickly
- Being ordered and organised

These are some of the areas that dyslexia can affect a young person who may have noticed other things that they also find difficult, as well as strengths and talents- creativity, good spatial awareness, problem solving and communication.



Learning differences

It is important to understand that young people who have dyslexia may have difficulties in some areas of learning. Dyslexia is best understood as a whole picture. There are areas of learning young people might find challenging but also those that they may find very easy.

We all learn and remember information using our senses. Some people learn best by using a particular sense or a mixture of two or three. It might be different when learning different things. For example, you might be able to visualise events but you might struggle to visualise spellings.

How do people learn best?

Seeing?

You learn best through watching films, reading books, looking at maps, information charts or computer programmes.

Listening?

You learn best through listening to stories, songs and talking about your learning.

Doing?

You learn best through hands-on activities, making, and building or through movement.

We all learn in different ways.



Photo caption here

Learning which encourages a person to use all of their senses is called multi-sensory learning and helps to process and remember the things that have been learnt.

Once you understand how you learn and begin to have the right support dyslexia does not have to present the barriers that it once did.

Who else has dyslexia?

Many people have dyslexia. In the United Kingdom, 1 in 10 people have dyslexia.

Dyslexia affects boys and girls equally and can run in families. Many people who have dyslexia are very clever, they just learn in a different way.

There are many famous people past and present who have dyslexia. Actors, musicians, inventors, artists, writers, business people etc.

People who have dyslexia can learn, achieve and succeed in a wide range of jobs.



Lewis Irving, Year 10

Student profile

Things I'm good at.

Imagination. Working as part of a team. Confident communicator. Insightful – I look at things differently. Sports. Team player.

What helps you learn?

Small group work. Computers. TAs do help in class but small group work is more effective, interesting and fun. Using mini whiteboards. Overlays. Larger Bolder text. Buff is best or yellow paper.

Things I struggle with.

Reading my own writing. Being distracted. Forgetting what I have to do. Worried I won't understand. Organisation. Homework.

What can I do to help myself?

Be brave and ask teachers for help. Use ICT. Use buff paper. I want to set up a dyslexic study group.

What can school do to help?

Be more understanding about homework. More small group work. Update IT. Create a place to talk.

What can parents and carers do at home to help?

As parents or carers you could...

- Listen to your son or daughter... find out what is working for them with their learning.
 - And if there are difficulties, be proactive in finding ways round the problems with creative problem solving.
 - Celebrate your child as a unique and successful person ...develop strengths and talents in how they approach their learning and also in their out of school activities.
 - Give them the choice if they want your help or not.
 - Help to plan, organise, make sense of their learning and revise (at exam time).
- Use a timer to help keep a limit to homework both for you and for your child.
 - Keep in close contact with school through emails, home school planner or regular meetings etc.
 - Find different ways to help them record their ideas.
 - Work together at proof reading work-discuss with school the best way to approach this –less can be good!)
 - And most importantly, be a parent!



Harry with his mum



Harry at school, drumming

Other resources and support available for families

Local support

Advice from the school or college learning support department would be a good place to start. School have a SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator) who should be able to advise you.

Cornwall Dyslexia Service

Dyslexia Advisers can work alongside school to provide advice and support for young people in their school or college.
dyslexia@cornwall.gov.uk

Cornwall Dyslexia Association

Telephone: 01872 222911
Helpline: 01872 274827
www.cornwalldyslexia.org.uk
On Facebook

National Resources for families

Did you know?

You can get free information and resources from The Dyslexia-SpLD Trust, a collaboration of 7 organisations focusing on literacy, dyslexia and specific learning difficulties.

www.thedyslexia-spldtrust.org.uk
info@thedyslexia-spldtrust.org.uk



British Dyslexia Association



Dyslexia Action
Taking Action - Changing Lives



Helen Arkell
Dyslexia Centre



xtraordinary people



Springboard
Life-changing Mentor



The Dyslexia-SpLD Trust



patoss



DYT
driver youth trust

Parent Champions

Parent Champions is an initiative set up by the Dyslexia-SpLD Trust to support parents and carers of children with dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties. It provides reliable, relevant information and a voice amongst specialist organisations and policy makers.

The website **www.parentchampions.org.uk** is packed with lots of practical resources and a wide range of expert advice including five short films with top tips on reading, writing, spelling, organisation and memory.

Also, you can join in via Face book and Twitter where you can share ideas, get support, be in touch with Parent Champions from across the UK and air your views on any issue that is important to you.

You can join the national team of Parent Champions at **www.parentchampions.org.uk**.

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Empowering Parents and Carers



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Understanding dyslexia

A guide for students



A note to students

Finding out you have dyslexia can be an overwhelming experience or in many cases a huge relief to finally understand why you have been struggling.

This guide has been co written by a group of young people and their parents. It has been specifically designed to help you and your family gain a better understanding of dyslexia and how it may affect you. It includes useful help, advice and information.

It has been produced as part of the Parent Champion initiative, a national project created by the Dyslexia-SpLD Trust.

Esther Squance



Molly Williams



Finlay Loader



Raife Gaskell



Lewis Irving



Angus Hallum



Rebecca Nightingale



Rachael Russell (SENCO)



Megan Irving



Understanding Dyslexia

A guide for students

Why is it worth you reading this guide?

The students who contributed to this booklet would like you to know:

- It's good to know that people with dyslexia have been successful.
- They feel better knowing that lots of people struggle just like they do.
- Their parents have been more supportive now they understand what it's like to be dyslexic.
- It's a relief to know that they are not stupid- They know what they are good at and why they find other things difficult.
- They can explain why they can't do certain things to their mates.

• There's nothing wrong with being dyslexic. The key message for students is that dyslexia does not have to hold you back from your ambitions and aspirations.

This has been written to help you to strive for independence with your learning and be successful in the things you choose now and for your future.



Harry



Rachel Russell (SENCO)

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What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia comes from a Greek word;

Dys - meaning difficulty

Lexia - meaning to do with words

If you have dyslexia it means that you might have difficulty with accurate and fluent reading, writing, spelling or speaking.

It can also affect your working memory i.e. holding on to a lot of information in your head at one time and responding to it.

Some young people find that organisation, handwriting, maths and concentration can also be a problem.

"Dyslexia is a learning difference: a combination of strengths and weaknesses which affects the learning process"

(taken from British Dyslexia Association booklet on Dyslexia Friendly Schools)



Letter jenga

This means that young people who have dyslexia learn in ways that are different from other young people.

Learning differences

If you have dyslexia you may or may not have difficulties in all areas of learning. Dyslexia is best understood as a whole picture. There are areas of learning you might find challenging but also those that you might find very easy.

We all learn and remember information using our senses. Some people learn best by using a particular sense or a mixture of two or three. It might be different when you are learning different things. For example, you might be able to visualise events but you might struggle to visualise spellings.



Photo caption here

How do you learn best?

Seeing? Eyes

You learn best through watching films, reading books, looking at, maps, information charts or computer programmes.

Listening? Ears

You learn best through listening to stories, songs and talking about your learning.

Doing? Hands

You learn best through hands-on activities, making, and building or through movement.

We all learn in different ways.

Learning which encourages you to use all of your senses is called multi-sensory learning and helps you to process and remember the things you have learnt.

Once you understand how you learn and begin to have the right support dyslexia does not have to present the barriers that it once did.

Dyslexia may create challenges, but by understanding how you learn best, by focusing on and celebrating your strengths and getting the right support, you can begin to feel more confident in your learning.

- Believe in your ability to succeed
- Always aim to do your best
- Ask for help when you need it.
- Trust your strengths and learning styles
- Do the things you love



Esther Squance, Year 9

Student profile

What are you good at?

- Music – listening, playing drums, singing, piano, guitar, steel band, samba.
- Looking after friends- lots of people talk to me and I'm a good listening.
- Hospitable.
- Spanish.

What helps you learn?

- Visual modelling, watching videos and having pictures to back-up information.
- Kinaesthetic learning activities – doing the task rather than just being told how to do it.
- Reader for tests and exams.

- A colourful ruler helps me stay on the right lines when I'm reading.

What do you struggle with?

Reading out loud. Spelling. Sometimes the pace of lessons is too fast. Homework.

What helps at home?

Mum! She reminds me to do homework. Older brothers often help as they've been through school.

What can you do to help yourself?

Be firm with yourself and get on with the work even if it's hard. I really want to be a teacher when I'm older.

What can you do?

Spend some time reflecting or thinking about what works for you.

- Where and when do you learn best?
- How do you organise your time and notes?
- Who would you go to if you get stuck?

Organise your notes and class work (e.g. colour coded folders, being disciplined about paper and computer filing).

Have a supply of the resources you need readily available and in a specific place e.g. scissors, glue, post-its, labels etc.

Instead of written notes, use sketches, mind maps instead of notes.

Visit, visit and revisit things you have to remember.

Do your homework as soon as you can after it has been set.

Make use of revision classes to help revise and prepare for exams.

If you have extra time in exams, work out with help how to make the best use of it!

Practise proof reading your work.

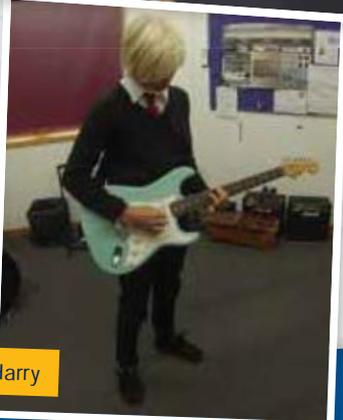
Develop good time management-time to work, rest and play!



Angus Hallam



Raife Gaskell



Harry

What can school do?

Teachers and other members of staff can

- Listen to how things are going and if things go wrong, work out how to improve the situation.
 - Recognise your strengths and celebrate your successes.
 - Run homework clubs where teachers or teaching assistants can help you.
 - Teach you study skills and practice exam arrangements.
 - Provide you with a key place or person to go to if you need to speak to someone.
 - In school there will be a member of staff who can help. It may be your form tutor, or a SENCo (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator) or Inclusion Manager.
 - Provide a range of reading materials and ways to improve your reading.
 - Provide regular information for your teachers about what things may help you - some schools use a passport that highlights what you are good at, ways that you learn and specific strategies that help you.
- Have a range of whole school strategies that support literacy e.g. subject specific vocabulary, list of SSV, vary how work is recorded, use of overlays, access to IT, alternatives to writing available in class picture of a mind map.

A photograph showing a student from behind, sitting at a desk and using a computer. The student is wearing a grey sweater. The computer monitor is visible, and the student appears to be focused on the screen.

Using computers

A photograph of a school library. The shelves are filled with a wide variety of colorful books, including fiction, non-fiction, and educational materials. The books are arranged neatly on the shelves, and there are some books on a table in the foreground.

The library



Help from home with your parents or carers could include ...

- Celebrate you as a unique and successful person.
- Find the best time to get help from the adults at home.
- Use a timer to help keep a limit to homework both for you and your parents.
- Keep in close contact with school.
- Enjoy reading and talking as family activities.
- Find different ways to show what you know.
- Develop a toolkit or menu of ways to record what you know.
- Occasionally use your parents as a scribe.
- Use of IT to record your work.

How can technology can help?

There is a whole range of ever-changing resources available out there to use at home or in school: Information Technology (IT) is a really useful support for many students and can be used for organisation - recording; drafting and editing longer pieces of work practising and developing literacy and numeracy skills revising and researching completing external exams if this is your normal method of recording

A good starting point for finding out more is from School or College or SpLD Trust websites and associated links.

Who else can help provide information support and resources?

- School or college form tutor or SENCo at school
- CDA Local Dyslexia Association
- The Dyslexia -SpLD Trust

Some of the students who have been involved in this project have created additional info/ videos about dyslexia...take a look!

Sir James Smiths, Treviglas, Penair.

Wall of fame

Being dyslexic does not have to hold you back...

The aim throughout this guide is about sending a positive and clear message that if you have dyslexia it does not have to stop you from having great aspirations and ambitions for yourself; nothing has to hold you back.



Raife Gaskell

Photo: Carie Gaskell



Winston Churchill

Agatha Christie

Cher

John Lennon



Harry



Jamie Oliver



Scott Quinnell



Magan Irving



Matthew Good

Benjamin Franklin

Walt Disney

Duncan Goodhew



Albert Einstein



Could this be you?

*'If you can imagine it, you can do it.'
Albert Einstein*