

Dyslexia tips

Hot Spot Teacher's Book provides additional support for teaching dyslexic students. Helpful tips precede activities which dyslexic students are likely to find difficult. These tips provide teachers with ideas on how they can further encourage their students.

This page provides a summary of strategies that can be used to help dyslexic students in your lessons.

Characteristics of dyslexic students

Dyslexic students may have some or all of these characteristics:

- easily distracted
- short attention span
- poor short term memory
- poor reading skills
- weak reading comprehension skills
- poor spelling
- poor handwriting
- difficulty in remembering sequences, including instructions
- slow to complete tasks
- slow and often inaccurate copying (e.g. from the board)

They may also face repeated failure on a daily basis and can have very low self-esteem and extreme lack of confidence.

How can teachers help?

- Be understanding and sympathetic towards students' difficulties.
- Show that you are willing to help.
- Accept and respect all their efforts.
- Bear in mind that dyslexic students are often highly intelligent despite their difficulties.

Main strategies for teaching dyslexic students

- Sit dyslexic students at the front of the class where they can see the board and hear the teacher most easily.
- Give new information more than once and check that it has been understood in a way that does not embarrass the student.
- Teach in short chunks and change activities frequently to keep attention and motivation.
- Keep spoken instructions short, simple and in the correct sequence.
- Give information on a sheet to be stuck into books rather than being copied from the board.
- Give instructions for homework in writing, preferably on a handout.
- Be very cautious about asking dyslexic students to read aloud as this can cause great anxiety. Keep reading activities within small ability groups or pairs.
- Give students sufficient time to complete each task or make the task shorter according to abilities.
- Reward for content and effort. When marking, focus on one or two mistakes for correction rather than marking all errors, as this is very discouraging.

- Revise frequently and in different ways to help transfer information from short to long term memory. One third of each lesson should consist of revision.
- Allow students to demonstrate knowledge orally.
- All teaching should be multi-sensory. That is, students should see, hear and be able to touch or do something with the information being taught.
- Allow students to experience success and avoid tasks that may lead to failure. Don't ask your dyslexic student to do anything you are not sure they will be able to do.

Dyslexia and language learning

Learning a language can be broken down into two elements: comprehension (listening and reading) and production (speaking and writing). Normally, comprehension develops first and students require confidence in order to be able to produce spoken or written language. Dyslexic students find reading and writing particularly difficult. Thus slowing their production.

- Ask questions that only need a nod, simple action or a *yes/no, true/false* response to show understanding.
- Give new information in small chunks followed by plenty of practice.
- Keep written work to a minimum.
- English spelling is exceptionally difficult for dyslexic students. Accept a phonic equivalent of the word in written work and allow students to use wall displays, vocabulary lists and individual word cards for independent writing.
- Use objects and pictures as much as possible to teach vocabulary and grammar. Students will memorise more if they are able to see, touch, hold, wear, smell or even taste as appropriate.
- Use singing, chanting and rapping to practise vocabulary and grammar. These are particularly helpful as an aid to long term memory.
- Help students' listening comprehension by speaking slowly and in short chunks. When using recordings, pause and repeat frequently.
- When doing a listening comprehension, get students to use drawing instead of writing to indicate understanding (this is particularly useful for descriptions and stories).
- Help students' reading comprehension by underlining the main meaning-carrying words in a text. For listening comprehensions, give these words a slight emphasis.
- Students are likely to be most comfortable in pairs or small ability groups for reading and speaking activities.
- Don't expect production from your dyslexic students straight away.

Remember: The most significant factor affecting the learning of dyslexic students is their teacher's attitudes towards them and their difficulties.