

# Dyslexia – Friendly Strategies for the Classroom



**Dyslexia Support South**  
*where hope meets learning*

# Strategies – Accommodating dyslexic challenges

| What to consider  | Strategy suggestions  |
|---|---|
| How might I support their processing of verbal information? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Think about language you are using</li><li>• Refer to this handout</li><li>• Give completed examples, at different levels, so they can see what it looks like.</li><li>• Give them prior learning opportunities. This could be a video, diagram, audio book or reading.</li></ul>   |
| How might I support their short-term memory?                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Connect the learning to something to something they know outside school eg interests, family</li><li>• Explicitly connect learning from one subject to another eg when learning to read a word, be explicit in how it connects to being able to spell and write the word.</li><li>• Show them a diagram of how the information connects.</li><li>• Get them to show you in a creative way, eg diagram or verbally, what the concept is they are learning.</li></ul>   |
| How might I support their sequencing and ordering?          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use visual aids to increase understanding</li><li>• Use multisensory methods</li><li>• Use checklists. Create the steps for them to follow and in sequential order. Ensure the steps are small enough and explicit. Ensure they understand the process of using a checklist.</li><li>• Use sequencing tools such as mind mapping, bullet points or post it notes. Post it notes brain storming is when all the information about the story in their head is written on Post it notes. Each idea is written on one post it note. They can then be moved into an order that fits the writing eg, introduction, paragraph one, paragraph two etc.</li><li>• Allow more time for them to sequence and order information</li></ul> |

# Strategies – Using dyslexic strengths

| What to consider                                   | Strategy suggestions  |
|--|---|
| How might I connect to their big picture thinking? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Think about language you are using so it is strength based. Talk about how their brain learns, how their brain needs information etc.</li><li>• Refer to Big Picture thinking (Global)/Analytical Handout</li><li>• Give completed examples, at different levels, so they can see what it looks like.</li><li>• Give them prior learning opportunities. This could be a video, diagram, audio book or reading.</li></ul>  |
| How might I help them make the connections?        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Connect the learning to something to something they know outside school eg interests, family</li><li>• Explicitly connect learning from one subject to another eg when learning to read a word, be explicit in how it connects to being able to spell and write the word.</li><li>• Show them a diagram of how the information connects.</li><li>• Get them to show you in a creative way, eg diagram or verbally, what the concept is they are learning.</li></ul> |
| How might I show them?                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use visual aids to increase understanding eg diagrams, video's, pictures</li><li>• Use multisensory methods</li></ul>   |
| How might I hook into their deep empathy?          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use stories to give concepts/ideas</li><li>• Encourage peer work. Have them explain a concept to another student once they have grasped it. This works well if the other student is younger. Dyslexics have an ability to simplify ideas.</li></ul>   |

# Strategies – Environmental

| What to consider  | Strategy suggestions  |
|---|---|
| How can I make it easier to look at?                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce glare by using coloured paper, coloured screens, working under natural light</li> <li>• Consider changing how information is presented. Refer to <a href="#">Dyslexia Friendly Communication Guidelines</a></li> <li>• Activate the night light on the computer, change the background colour in a word document or use screen filter software <a href="https://www.aurelitec.com/colorveil/windows/">https://www.aurelitec.com/colorveil/windows/</a></li> </ul> |
| How can I make it easier to hear?                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow the ‘little and often’ rule when presenting verbal information</li> <li>• Consider what other noise is happening in or near the classroom that can interfere with their ability to process verbal information and manage this eg where seated, get their attention before speaking.</li> <li>• Refer to <a href="#">Auditory Processing in the Classroom</a>.</li> </ul>  |
| How might I manage the amount of information given at one time? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If visual               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- reduce how much information is on a page at a time</li> <li>- show the student how to manage how much info they see at one time eg cover the info on the page so only seeing what they need to see to do the work.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• If auditory               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- reduce amount of information given at one time</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                      |
| How do I support them with visual aids?                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For any verbal instructions, include written format.</li> <li>• Use of pictures, icons to show information or explain an idea.</li> <li>• Able to refer to spelling lists and basic facts lists or tables to complete classroom work</li> </ul>  |
| How do I give them more time?                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dyslexic students will be trying to mask they are struggling. Arrange extra time for them as a matter of course. Be discreet about this and do not try to make them feel singled out.</li> </ul>   |
| How can I make it easier for them to be in the classroom?       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Think about how the classroom looks visually? Is there a lot of pictures on the walls?</li> <li>• Is there order in the classroom? For example, everything in its place and tidy.</li> <li>• How can I arrange the seating so they can see me and hear me?</li> </ul>  |

# Strategies – Managing brain state for anxiety

| What to consider                                    | Strategy suggestions   |
|---|--|
| How might I create a relationship with the student? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Be respectful</li><li>• Resist saying they need accommodations in front of others (especially important for older children)</li><li>• Teachers naturally create relationships with their students however for dyslexic learners it is especially critical for anxiety management.</li><li>• Be mindful of tone and body language. Dyslexics are susceptible to these and will “hear” a critical voice very easily.</li></ul> |
| How might I create routine (predictability)         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Routine can be in individual classrooms with individual teachers or across a syndicate or across the school.</li><li>• Predictability reduces the need for students to use cognitive space to process what they are expected to do.</li><li>• Consistent language between teachers and classrooms used for explaining concepts and lessons and in the routine for starting and ending lessons.</li></ul>                     |
| How might I give them extra time?                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This can be extra time or support when completing tests.</li><li>• This can be information given as prior learning so they can get the big picture.</li><li>• Consider reader/writers or extra time for PAT's</li><li>• Be discreet about offering extra time and/or support.</li></ul>  |
| How might I make them feel accepted?                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understanding if they could learn quickly and easily they would.</li><li>• Recognise behaviours as indicators for the brain being under stress from the task and/or anxiety.</li><li>• Increase your own understanding of the strengths and challenges a dyslexic brain has.</li><li>• Listening to their concerns about learning and not minimising them.</li></ul>   |

# Strategies – Using feedback and strength-based language

| What to consider                                | Strategy suggestions  |
|---|---|
| How might I build their self-esteem?            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Noticing what they are good at and providing effective feedback to them.</li> <li>• For feedback to be effective it needs to follow certain rules. The main one is it is targeted and specific of the effort the student has shown. The other rules can help but praising effort is the most important one.</li> <li>• See Effective Praise handout for guidelines</li> <li>• Help them believe they have the ability to learn.</li> </ul>   |
| How might I motivate them?                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing effective feedback for activities other than academic school work such as sport, art, social skills, can still improve academic engagement.</li> <li>• Being sincere, explicit, true and timely with the effective feedback</li> <li>• They are praise starved so if the feedback is following the “rules” you can’t do too much.</li> </ul>   |
| How might I provide effective feedback?         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For effective feedback you can focus on               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– their dyslexic strengths (this will have a lifetime impact helping them to identify their dyslexic thinking strengths)</li> <li>– their efforts especially with tasks they find hard</li> <li>– their talents</li> <li>– their character strengths</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Practice doing it. Set yourself up with a couple sentence starters, for example, I like how you.... Or I noticed you .....</li> </ul>   |
| How might I recognise their strengths?          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Think about their dyslexic strengths</li> <li>• Think about their character strengths</li> </ul>   |
| How might I help them develop a growth mindset? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children praised for working hard did not focus solely on results or on “looking smart;” they focused on learning the task.</li> <li>• Using the word “yet”, for example, if they say “I can’t do this”, you can add yet.</li> <li>• Explaining that they are creating new pathways in their brain as they learn new material. It’s harder at the start and this is normal. Connect it to something they have mastered eg riding a bike, learning their sounds and how it was hard to start with but with practice and effort they got there.</li> </ul> |

**Improving self-esteem improves motivation.**