

Adult Dyslexia



What is Dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty which makes it harder to learn how to read, write and spell accurately. It is not caused by lack of education or by lack of intelligence. Adults will often have developed ways of coping with these difficulties and even ways of hiding it. Dyslexic difficulties occur on a spectrum from mild to severe. It affects approximately 10% of the population.

A core difficulty is with phonological processing, meaning how well you can deal with the sound units that make up words. People with dyslexia often have difficulties with working memory and speed of retrieval of information from long term memory. This can make learning challenging, but support strategies can help.

People with dyslexia may experience greater stress and frustration as they try to learn, resulting in heightened anxiety, particularly in relation to literacy acquisition.

People with dyslexia may also have accompanying learning strengths. Some adults feel that having dyslexia makes them think differently and encourages creativity.

Dyslexia occurs across the spectrum. People with literacy difficulties and dyslexia can be found in every walk of life and every workplace, from the shop floor to the boardroom, from engineering to acting.

Famous dyslexics include:

Richard Branson, Jamie Oliver, Brendan O'Carroll, Jane McGrath (Red Rock), Catherine Byrne (Fair City), Stephen Spielberg, Sir Jackie Stewart, Eddie Izzard, Keira Knightley and Orlando Bloom.

Did you know that ...

- Dyslexia affects the way you learn and how you deal with information.
- Dyslexia affects each person differently, even within the same family.
- Dyslexia has nothing to do with intelligence or how long you spent at school.
- Many people go through life without ever knowing they have dyslexia.
- Many people with dyslexia are very successful in life.
- Some people with dyslexia have very good ability in other areas, e.g. art and design, engineering, business, marketing, innovation.
- Others drop out of school and blame themselves for their problems.
- Dyslexia is recognised as a disability under law, therefore reasonable accommodations can and should be provided.
- People with dyslexia are often very slow to go for promotion or to join clubs or groups because of reading or spelling problems.
- Many people with dyslexia feel it damages their self confidence.
- If people do not get the proper help for their dyslexic difficulties it can affect both their work and home life.
- People with dyslexia can be helped greatly by understanding their own way of learning and by finding a teacher/tutor who can help them to manage their dyslexia and develop their literacy skills.
- Technology can be of huge benefit to people with dyslexia, enabling them to manage their dyslexia independently.
- Once they understand and learn how to manage their dyslexia, many adults are very proud to be dyslexic. They view it as a difference that makes them special, and gives them a different insight on the world.

Dyslexia Checklist

- Do you dislike reading out loud?
- Does it take you a long time to read a book?
- Do you find it hard to remember what you have read?
- Do you sometimes pronounce words incorrectly?
- Do you have problems with spelling?
- Did you have difficulty at school and did you do less well in written exams than you feel you should have?
- Do you find it hard to do sums in your head?
- Do you have problems knowing when to use capital letters, or punctuation marks?
- Do you get phone numbers wrong?
- Do you find it hard to take phone messages and pass them on correctly?
- Do you confuse 'left' and 'right'?
- Is your handwriting hard to read?
- Do you find it hard to see the mistakes you have made in written work?
- Do you have 'good' days and 'bad' days?
- Do you find it hard to remember things in the right order, like the months of the year, or multiplication tables?
- Do you find it hard to remember new facts, new names?
- Do you get confused with times and dates?
- Do you find it hard to learn the same way as other people in a class or group?

- Do you forget quickly the things you have worked hard to learn?
- Does someone else in your family have the same kind of problems?

Many people will say yes to some of these questions as we all have strengths and weaknesses. However, someone with dyslexia may say yes to many items on this list, though not all, as dyslexia varies. If you feel that you are ticking many of these boxes, you may want to consider an assessment.

Assessment of Dyslexia

An assessment for dyslexia is usually done with an educational psychologist. The process takes between two and three hours which includes an interview, tests and verbal feedback.

The assessment covers a range of literacy skills including reading of single words (both real and non-words), phonological awareness, reading fluency/speed, reading accuracy, comprehension and spelling. Related cognitive skills including memory, rapid naming and other language skills are also investigated. An IQ test may be needed to fulfil a specific requirement such as supporting applications for certain resources or accommodations.

Following the assessment, a full written report is provided to the client. The written report should highlight priority areas for intervention, and make recommendations for specific accommodations, supports and teaching approaches appropriate to the individuals identified needs. Adults should contact the educational psychologist after they have received their report, e.g. if they have a query or are seeking extra information. An assessment report is an important document which may be needed as evidence of dyslexia when applying for supports/accommodations.

Some adults who suspect they have dyslexia may decide not to seek a formal assessment. Others find it helps to put their experience with learning into context, and it can dispel false labels they have given themselves such as “I’m stupid” or “I can’t learn”. For others, a formal assessment report may be required as evidence when applying for accommodations in college or the workplace.

Where to get an assessment

- Very occasionally students in college or further education may be able to get assessed through their college. Talk to your tutor or the college Disability/Access Service for advice.
- The DAI operates an assessment service on a not-for profit basis at our national office in Dublin, and offers reduced rates to those in financial need (www.dyslexia.ie).
- There are also educational psychologists in private practice who offer assessments. The Psychological Society of Ireland maintains a list (www.psihq.ie).

Financial support for the cost of an assessment may be available from DSP Intreo offices, or your Local Employment Service. Organisations like St. Vincent de Paul, and Elizabeth Finn Care have also helped people.

Literacy and Learning Opportunities

Literacy is central to so many aspects of life. Therefore, development of literacy skills is critical to help people with dyslexia achieve their potential. A range of options are available to adults with dyslexia seeking help to improve their reading, writing and spelling skills. These enable adults to progress to further education and training and to progress in the workplace.

The **Dyslexia Association of Ireland (DAI)** runs a **free information service** from our national office – phone 01 877 6001, email info@dyslexia.ie, online www.dyslexia.ie and in person (a weekly drop in clinic takes place on Wednesday afternoons or by appointment at other times). DAI runs monthly adult seminars at our national office and on request in centres around the country. These cover topics such as What is Dyslexia?, Dyslexia in Further and Higher Education and Dyslexia in the Workplace, and include tips for managing your dyslexia and how technology can help. DAI also maintains a list of qualified teachers who have done specialist training in dyslexia and who offer private one-to-one tuition (€30-35 per hour on average).

Career Paths Course for Adults with Dyslexia: DAI runs a unique free 9-month, full-time training course for unemployed adults with dyslexia at our Career Paths Centre in Leixlip. This course is run in conjunction with Kildare Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB) and SOLAS (the Further Education and Training Authority). It offers a Major Award in Employability Skills at Level 3, as well as daily specialist literacy tuition. Trainees make significant progress over the nine months and most progress to Further and Higher Education and the workforce. For information on the course phone 01 606 0009 or visit www.careerpathsfordyslexia.com

“When I started I didn’t believe I’d be able for it ... now I’m in College”

Career Paths participant

NALA, the National Adult Literacy Agency, in conjunction with the Education and Training Boards (**ETBs**) offer free local adult literacy classes (both one-to-one and group classes) nationwide. Freephone 1800 20 20 65 or visit www.nala.ie for details on adult education centres in your area. NALA also offers a free **distance education service** (www.writeon.ie) where you can learn at your own pace, in your own home.

The **Adult Education Guidance Initiative** (www.ncge.ie) delivered by the ETBs offers nationwide guidance for learners before, during and after they participate in adult literacy and community education programmes. This can be accessed through local ETBs.

Local libraries are involved with supporting literacy in the community as part of the Right to Read campaign. Contact your local library for information on what they have available. Libraries also often have assistive technology available on their computers, e.g. screen reading software which will read text for you.

Aontas promotes lifelong learning. It also manages the One Step Up programme which helps to find available education and training options (www.onestepup.ie or Freephone 1800 303 669).

Local **Intreo** offices provide information and advice on vocational training and work opportunities. You can meet with an employment services officer in your local Intreo office (www.welfare.ie) to discuss available opportunities.

Qualifax, the national learners' database (www.qualifax.ie), provides information on all further and higher education and training courses certified under the National Framework of Qualifications.

CareersPortal also provides comprehensive career guidance from study options to seeking employment (www.careersportal.ie).

Dyslexia at Third Level

Third level colleges and universities are required to make reasonable accommodations to prevent disadvantage that may arise from a disability such as dyslexia. Most colleges have dedicated units and staff members who provide these specific supports, often called the Disability Support Service or Access Office. The activities of these services vary from college to college, but they generally provide information, act as advocates and organise the provision of necessary supports for students with disabilities, including dyslexia. They often

have an important role in creating a higher awareness of the needs of students with disabilities among the teaching staff of the college. They aim to make the college a more accessible place to students with difficulties such as dyslexia by promoting universal design for learning which accommodates all students' needs.

To access these supports, it is important that all students with dyslexia contact the Disability Support personnel in their college as early as possible to ensure that any necessary supports are put in place as soon as possible. The types of supports which can be available in third level colleges include: access to lecture notes, note-taking support, photocopying facilities, extra tutorial supports, study skills seminars, assistive technology, and exam accommodations such as use of computer, extra time, spelling and grammar waiver, use of a reader.

The **Fund for Students with Disabilities** supports the provision of services and accommodations to eligible students. Currently, an up-to-date educational psychology assessment report is required as evidence of dyslexia, as well as an assessment of need conducted by the college. For details on all financial supports available for those going to college see www.studentfinance.ie

Applying to College: Generally applications for undergraduate courses are made through the **CAO** system (Central Applications Office www.cao.ie) including those from mature applicants.

The **Disability Access Route to Education (DARE)** is an admissions scheme which offers places in certain colleges on a reduced points basis to school leavers with disabilities, including dyslexia. Evidence of dyslexia has to be provided as well as evidence of impact. See www.accesscollege.ie for information.

AHEAD, the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability, (www.ahead.ie or 01 716 4396) provides an information helpdesk, and runs the annual Better Options Fair which provides information and advice on services and supports in higher education for people with disabilities, including dyslexia.

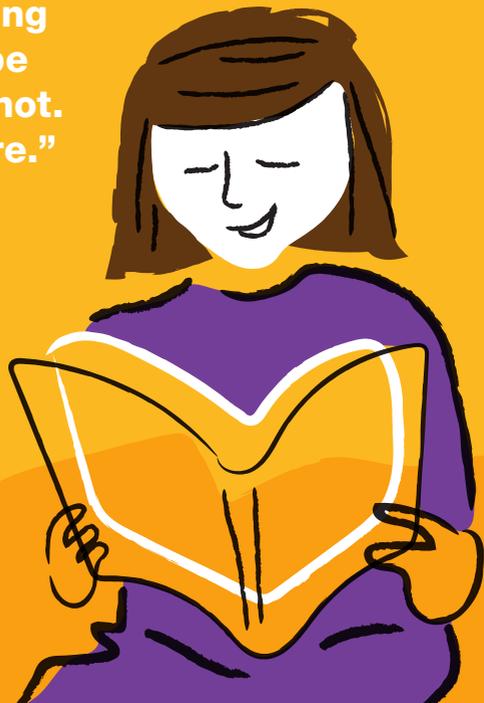
Dyslexia in the Workplace

We all struggle at work sometimes, and can feel stressed. Dyslexia can exacerbate that. Virtually all jobs require some reading, writing, remembering and use of computers. Adults with dyslexia may also struggle with time management and organisation at work. However, employees with dyslexia can manage it successfully with a combination of strategies and technology, in a supportive environment.

Initial job training should consider the needs of adults with dyslexia. This means providing information in alternative formats, flexible multi-sensory learning, more time and repetition of information when necessary.

Remember that dyslexia affects people very differently, and not every difference someone has may be due to their dyslexia. What works for one employee with dyslexia may not suit another employee with dyslexia. The individual often knows best what will work for them – they are the expert on how dyslexia affects them.

“I thought learning to read would be hellish but it’s not. I’m getting there.”



Tips and Suggestions

- Try out different fonts and text sizes to see what works best for you.
- Ask for written information in advance so you have time to read through it and think about it.
- Ask clarifying questions if you need additional information.
- Develop strategies to buy yourself time – “Can I get back to you on that? I don’t have an answer straight away so let me do some research and I’ll get back to you with an answer shortly.”
- No one has perfect spelling all of the time! The odd spelling error in an internal email shouldn’t be a big deal. However for important external communications accuracy is essential, so ask a colleague to proof read for you. Most people who don’t have dyslexia also benefit from doing this.
- Use highlighters, colour coding to highlight important information and to categorise work.
- Plan and map out your tasks for the day, and check back on your plan to see what you have achieved. Make sure to prioritise the urgent items. If you didn’t get something done today, make sure it goes onto tomorrow’s list. It can be easy to focus on what you haven’t done yet but do take time to recognise what you have achieved.
- Use your phone or email calendar to set reminders for meetings, or project deadlines.
- A quieter work space may help. Some adults find noise-cancelling headphones useful to minimise distractions.
- Use templates – this saves you reinventing the wheel each time you come to writing an email or letter.

- Break large tasks down into component parts and plan a realistic timeline for completion. Ask for feedback on drafts to help you improve the work.
- Use text to speech technology to help access written material. Adults with dyslexia often have a slower speed of reading, so this technology can really speed up access to information. They can also help with proof reading your written work; you can sometimes hear errors that you don't see on the page. Lots of tech supports are now free and inbuilt on phones, tablets and PCs, and apps are very cheap. You can use the voice recorder on your phone to make audio notes, rather than writing notes down under time pressure. There are also grants available to employers for necessary technology/aids for employees with disabilities (Workplace Equipment Adaptation Grants – see www.welfare.ie).
- Talk to your work colleagues. This will help them to better understand how dyslexia affects you. Talk about the positives as well as the negatives. People with dyslexia can have great strengths in other areas, e.g. people skills, problem-solving, creativity.
- It is worth remembering that sometimes when you feel overwhelmed with work it is because the workload is too great for any one person. People with dyslexia often feel that any difficulty they encounter is their fault and that others would cope better. If you find yourself in this situation do talk to a colleague or friend and approach your manager or employer about possibly adjusting your workload.
- Be proud of your dyslexia. As a successful adult with dyslexia you will have developed great skills, persistence and ability to deal with challenges. These are valuable skills that employers value.

**“It’s a human right knowing
how to read and write”**

Career Paths participant

As an employer, a little bit of understanding and some extra time can be the best supports that you can give to a dyslexic employee.

Disclosure can be a real concern – how, when or even if you should disclose your dyslexia to an employer. There is no right answer here. It is your own choice, but if you do disclose, do it with confidence; don't apologise. The best disclosure is planned, balanced (looking at both strengths and weaknesses) and most importantly focused on solutions. Often the employee knows best what will resolve a difficulty. AHEAD has a good disclosure guide on their website (www.ahead.ie).

EmployAbility support services nationwide (www.employability.ie) support people with disabilities and health issues to access and retain employment. The service is open to people with disabilities, including dyslexia, who are “job ready” and need job coach support to obtain and/or retain employment. Referral is made from your local Intreo office.

AHEAD operates the **WAM programme** (Willing Able Mentoring). It offers paid six and nine month internships to graduates with disabilities, including dyslexia. It offers support to employers and graduates including needs assessment and mentoring.

Discrimination/Unfair Treatment: Dyslexia is recognised as a disability under law. If an individual feels that they have been treated unfairly in the workplace because of their dyslexia, and if this hasn't been resolved with the employer, they could lodge a complaint via www.workplacerelations.ie. The **Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission** (www.ihrec.ie) also provides information on your rights.

Technology

While technology is not a magic bullet, it is very dyslexia friendly. It is multisensory in nature, easy to use, customisable, motivating and provides lots of opportunities for practice. It can be used to support the development of literacy skills, to access information, to write, to proof read. It can help with organisation and support memory. The range of what is available is expanding on a daily basis. The challenge can be how to integrate it into college life or the workplace.

Assistive Technology Options:

Text to Speech programmes and apps will convert text to speech so you can have text read out to you. This speeds up access to text, and can be used to help proof read your own text. There is inbuilt speech/talk back functions on many tablets and smartphones. There are also apps available and software programmes for tablets, smartphones and computers which provide this function.

Speech to Text programmes will convert speech into text on a screen, enabling the production of written documents by dictation. For example Apple devices have inbuilt voice recognition for texts, emails and web browsing and the Siri personal assistant. There are also apps available that provide this function on both apple and android devices, and equivalent software programmes for computers.

Reading and Spelling: There is a wide range of programmes available to help develop and practice literacy skills, from phonics through to reading, spelling and writing support, as well as some useful websites such as www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise and www.writeon.ie.

Note-Taking and Recording Information: Software programmes and apps can be used to record lectures or workplace meetings, rather than trying to take notes/minutes in real time if spelling and writing are a challenge. This can also be useful for recording notes and reminders or to-do-lists.

Mind-Mapping programmes and apps provide the facility to make notes in a more visual way. This can be helpful when making revision notes in college, creating a plan for an essay, or a brainstorming session in the workplace. They connect information in a less text-heavy way, using key words and showing linkages visually.

Please visit www.dyslexia.ie/computers-and-technology for examples of specific programmes and apps currently available in each of the above categories.

Dyslexia Association of Ireland

DAI works with and for people affected by dyslexia, by providing information, offering appropriate support services, engaging in advocacy and raising awareness of dyslexia. Our vision is to work towards the development of a society where all people with dyslexia have access to appropriate assessment and support to reach their full potential through education, training and employment in all aspects of life.

Services offered by DAI include:

- Information
- Assessment
- Specialist tuition for children and adults
- Courses for parents
- Training for teachers and other education personnel
- Dyslexia awareness training
- Lobbying and advocacy.

If you would like further information, advice or support,
please contact the Dyslexia Association of Ireland at:

 5th Floor, Block B, Joyce's Court, Talbot Street, Dublin 1

 (01) 877 6001

 www.dyslexia.ie

 info@dyslexia.ie

 Dyslexia Association of Ireland

 @DyslexiaIreland

**“Education was my Everest ...
it was always difficult for me.
I’m in college now and
it’s amazing!”**

