



Disclosure and the Law

The Dyslexia Association of Ireland defines dyslexia as a specific learning difficulty affecting the acquisition of fluent and accurate reading and spelling skills. Dyslexic difficulties occur on a continuum from mild to severe and affects approximately 10% of the population. Dyslexia is complex and impacts people differently, it is a combination of strengths and challenges.

Dyslexia is a 'difference', **not** a disease or a defect; this is an important difference because it has implications for many aspects of the dyslexic person's life. Dyslexia is recognised legally as a disability in Ireland. This is important as it establishes the right to various accommodations that can be provided in the workplace.

Legislation

An employer has an obligation under disability legislation to ensure that all efforts are made to support the individual with dyslexia. This means making reasonable accommodations where necessary. Reasonable accommodations are supports provided by the employer to provide equity in the workplace for individuals with dyslexia or other needs, which remove barriers that may otherwise impact on the individual's work. Reasonable accommodations are most effective when tailored to both the individual and to their specific role and work environment. A one-size-fits-all approach does not work, and the accommodations an individual needs may change over time as their role changes or as their individual needs evolve.

Examples of reasonable accommodations in the workplace include:

-  Meeting minutes are provided in advance.
-  Accessible documentation.

- ✚ Extra time to work on projects.
- ✚ Inclusive working environments.
- ✚ Job duties aligned with employee strengths as much as possible.
- ✚ Assistive technology.

It is very important that the initial job training provided takes into account the specific needs of the adult with dyslexia. This requires flexibility in the approach to training, provision of information in alternative formats, multi-sensory learning techniques, more time and repetition of information when necessary.

Equality Legislation

- ✚ Dyslexia is classed as a disability under equality legislation, this means a person with dyslexia has the same protections under the law as someone with a physical or sensory disability.
- ✚ The acts aims to promote equality, allow positive action to ensure everyone gets full equality and to disallow discrimination whether direct or indirect across the nine grounds, including disability.
- ✚ Discrimination is defined as treating a person less favourably than a person in a similar situation on any of the nine grounds.
- ✚ Employers are obliged to make reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities, in consultation with the employee and based on their individual needs. What constitutes a 'reasonable adjustment' will vary depending on several factors including:
 - The nature of the job role
 - The size of the company
 - Cost in relation to the organisation's size
 - The practicality of putting adjustments in place
- ✚ Remember some of the most valuable reasonable accommodations cost nothing and are more about being flexible to individual needs, e.g. extra time, documents in advance of a meeting, tasks matched with strengths, incorporating the principles of [universal design within the workplace](#).

An individual who felt that he or she had been discriminated against because of a disability, such as dyslexia, could consider taking a case to the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (www.ihrec.ie). They have excellent information available on [Employment Rights](#) and on [Equal Status Rights](#).

Workplace Equipment Adaption Grants

[WEAG Grants](#) are administered by INTREO and is available to employers to help cover the cost of reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities. To avail of this grant contact your local INTREO office and ask to speak with the person responsible for reasonable accommodations in the workplace.

DAI have a range of short [videos](#), and documents discussing and demonstrating technology that one may find beneficial to refer to.

Disclosure

Whether or not you should disclose your dyslexia to your employer is a very personal decision. Everybody has his or her own preferences and you are **not** obliged to disclose dyslexia. The decision to disclose or not is usually made based on evaluating and contemplating the positives and negatives of disclosure.

The decision can be influenced by:

-  To what extent your dyslexia affects your work.
-  How comfortable you are telling people you are dyslexic
-  If you can suggest changes that could help you at work.

Disclosure makes it possible to request reasonable adjustments, both during the recruitment process and when employed. It may reduce the stress of trying to hide or mask difficulties and make work less isolating. It can increase self-esteem and raise awareness of dyslexia. If dyslexia is not disclosed at an early stage then it could make it harder to then disclose and request adjustments if difficulties arise at a later stage.

For many, the greatest uncertainties around the decision to disclosure lie in the fear of discrimination and lack of understanding from the employer along with the fear of negative responses/misunderstandings from colleagues.

For a job applicant, they may fear that if they declare their dyslexia they may never get to the interview stage, never mind getting a job offer. If an applicant decides to raise the matter of his/her dyslexia at the interview stage then it is important that they present their situation positively. However, it could turn out that the employer or human resources manager is aware of dyslexia and operates a system of equal opportunity. If the applicant does get the post, it is very probable that supports will be provided to facilitate the employee.

Choosing to disclose

Do not rush into your disclosure it is important you are prepared. You must fully understand your dyslexia. It is crucial you are balanced and positive, highlighting your strengths and areas of challenge. It is vital you are solution-focused; focus on what may assist you. Ahead have produced a [Guide to Disclosure](#) to help people to make the best decision and consider all the pros and cons.

Areas to consider focusing on when disclosing:

-  What is dyslexia?
-  My dyslexia – how dyslexia impacts me
-  Your areas of challenges
-  Your strengths
-  Supports including assistive technology that will enable you to fulfil your role.

Your disclosure may involve more than one conversation. Reasonable accommodations should be reviewed and evaluated, and modified if needed. It is very important should any significant change arise such as change of roles, additional tasks added to your job specification that your supports are reviewed.