

FACTSHEET 17: STUDY TIPS FOR STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA

Dyslexia may mean that you learn in a different way. While dyslexia may affect your reading, writing and spelling, it may also be hard to remember new information or to be organised. Even when you work harder than others in the class, it may be a struggle to get good results. You may know more than you can put down on paper. The assessment report shows learning strengths and weaknesses. Using your strengths, it is possible to find alternative ways to learn. Pick out what will work for you from the tips below. Your teachers are there to support you. Ask them for help and advice. There is a form called 'Asking for Help' which is included in Factsheet 18. This helps you pinpoint exactly what supports would help in the classroom so you can ask the teacher for them. Dyslexia Association of Ireland have 6 Study Skills Webinars for students which could be of help at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=UUbySI72M3zig6qxZRWTNw0w>.

Organisation.

- Study at a desk/table with plenty of room, shelves for files and books and with all necessary equipment present, such as staplers, highlighters, colour pens, etc.
- Take small breaks during the study period.
- Colour code the subjects in your timetable.
- Use the same colours for your files/copies, e.g. yellow for English, red for Maths.
- Have a 'housekeeping' day once a week where bags are cleared and notes are filed. If necessary, include the organisation of your locker in school.
- Always put the subject, date and topic as a heading on notes. Don't fold them.
- Have no distractions in study area such as TV or mobile phone.
- A calendar on the wall, with key dates for exams, school work, sports and social life.
- Study/revision timetable on the wall. This should be one that you **can** keep to. The website www.studentenrichment.ie has templates with blank timetables.
- Use the homework journal to take down homework and to pack the bag for the next day.

Motivation

- Study at the same time and in the same place so a routine is established.
- A tidy and organised study area helps you settle. It also avoids wasted time looking for items.
- Have a 'to do' list on the wall, so if you think of something, you can write it down. Have a revision plan detailing all topics for revision for an exam. Mark them off as you revise and see your progress.
- Motivation grows on success, so planning and meeting targets will encourage you.
- Use multi-sensory methods to learn. This means activities such as writing, highlighting, talking or making mindmaps. It is harder to be distracted if learning is activity based.
- Build in rewards for meeting goals, such as small treats like a small break or cup of coffee.
- Set clear goals. Long term goals are key life objectives such as getting the points for your chosen course in college. Medium term goals are the stages in getting to that point such as results in house exams. Short term goals are for this evening's study period. SMART goals help use study time in the most effective way. Again the website www.studentenrichment.ie has templates for long, medium and short term goal setting.

SMART Goals

SMART goals are:

Specified: Sets out exactly what is to do and when.

Measurable: Criteria for knowing you have achieved the goal.

Action based: What are the actions you need to do?

Realistic: It is possible for you to achieve the result within the time.

Time-based: Sets the time frame to achieve the goal.

Instead of a goal such as 'To read over the chapter on the Reformation three times', examples of SMART goals are statements such as:

- To learn 15 new words in French, their gender and spelling. (20 minutes)
- To learn 5 reasons for the Reformation, 6 key facts about Luther's life and 5 key beliefs he had. (25 minutes)
- To draw a picture of a microscope and label the ten key parts of it. (25 minutes)

Reading

Reading is a key skill for second level and for college.

- Reading improves, the more you read. Reading regularly will develop reading stamina, speed and comprehension. Read for 20 minutes a day as a routine. Find reading material that you are interested in whether it is newspapers, magazines or books.
- If it helps, use a ruler to keep your eye on the line of text. Have a pen or highlighter in your hand.
- It reduces errors in reading if you say the words quietly to yourself. This way you see and hear the words on the page. Particularly useful in the stress of the exam.
- Ask for advice if you are given lengthy reading lists so you can identify the key texts to read.
- Get tapes of English texts so you can listen as well as read the text. Look at the websites listed at the end of this Factsheet. There are video summaries of Shakespearian plays and No Fear Guides which have the original text and a modern English translation side by side. There are revision notes and on-line tutorials in lots of subjects.
- Use a reading method for texts such as SQ3R. SQ3R stands for Survey, Question, Read, Recite and Review and is a reading method to improve comprehension. It involves the following steps.
 - **Survey** the text by looking at title, headings, pictures, opening and closing paragraph.
 - **Question** what you expect to know after reading the text.
 - **Read** actively looking for answers to your questions.
 - **Recite**. See if you can answer the questions raised. The more senses involved in reciting, the more likely the learning is stick. Triple strength learning involves seeing, saying and hearing. Quadruple strength learning involves the addition of writing.
 - **Review**. In the following days and weeks check you can still answer the questions.

Spelling/Vocabulary

- Have a dictionary to help with new vocabulary. Put a tab for each section beginning with a new letter and have a bookmark with an alphabet on it so you can find words easily. Newer dictionaries have the alphabet printed on each page.
- Develop mnemonics for spelling words you confuse and need to spell correctly.
 - Dilemma: Emma has a **dilemma**.
 - Separate: There is a **rat** in **separate**.
- Keep a vocabulary notebook for each subject as words can have different meanings in different subjects.
- Become a word detective. Lots of longer words come from Latin and Greek. If you understand their meanings, you may be able to understand new words you might come across. For example, if *aqua* = *water*, *phobia* = *fear*, *hydro* = *water*, *bi* = *two*, *lateral* = *side*, *--cide* = *killing*, you might be able to guess the meaning of the following:
 - Aquaphobia, hydrophobia,
 - Hydrotherapy,
 - Bilateral, multilateral,
 - Herbicide, infanticide, insecticide.

This is particularly relevant to Science subjects such as Biology.

- Knowing the rules of Latin and Greek plurals can help make sense of the spelling, e.g. why **curriculum** changes to **curricula** or **fungus** changes to **fungi**. There are ten Latin and Greek plurals. See www.biomedicaleditor.com/spelling-tip-latin.html. This is particularly helpful for Biology and Health Sciences.

Notetaking

- Revision books can help if you find it difficult to summarise textbooks.

- Can you bypass taking notes in class so you can concentrate on understanding what is being said. This can be done by photocopying the notes of another student or asking the teacher for notes.
- When taking notes, mark words you cannot spell and move on. Ask the teacher later.
- Go over the notes that night, and redo them if legibility is a problem.
- Ask for time to take notes/diagrams in class. Any possibility of taking a photo with your phone?
- Use plenty of space, headings, colour and bullet points when making notes.
- Take time to make good notes/mindmaps as they can help in structuring answers.
- Graphic Organisers and Mindmaps help organise your thinking, help when learning/memorising material and then help in structuring written answers.

Learning

- Facts/notes need to go from short term into long term memory. This involves hard work to make the material your own. This does not happen by reading alone. It means changing the channel the information comes in by talking, listening, debating, drawing, visualising, writing or making mindmaps or flashcards.
- You need to understand what you are learning as rote learning is not likely to work for you.
- If there are specific facts, dates, definitions or words to be learnt, make study cards with the new word on one side and the explanation on the other side. Keep them in a box and test yourself often.
- Both Study Stack www.studystack.com and Quizlet www.quizlet.com allow you make flashcards or provide sets of flashcards.
- Mnemonics are devices for helping to memorise key facts. An example is **FATDAD** (Fermanagh, Antrim, Tyrone, Derry, Armagh, Down) for the 6 counties of Northern Ireland or **Richard of York gave battle in vain** (Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo and Violet) for the colours of the rainbow.
- Visualisation means making a mental image of a text, making pictures in your mind's eye. Here is an example. *The colours in the wires in the electric plug are blue, green/yellow, and brown. See the image of a Teddybear (brown for the live wire,) on green grass (green for the earth wire) and a blue sky (blue for the neutral).*
- It is only possible to memorise a limited number of unrelated facts, so organising a list of facts into groups help.

Writing

Writing involves so many tasks, which the student with dyslexia finds difficult, that there is often a mismatch between oral and written work. Written answers may be too short, lack fluency or do not answer the question asked. When you concentrate on the writing rules such as spelling, handwriting and punctuation, ideas suffer. When you are thinking and making interesting connections, the writing skills suffer. Divide the task into five stages.

1. **Understanding the question.** Take time to analysis the question and understand what is being asked. This is important. Very often students with dyslexia will start to write everything they know about a subject down, rather than using their information to answer the question being asked.
2. **Brainstorm.** With an empty sheet of paper, put down all ideas that come into your head with your mind running free and making associations.
3. **Planning.** Using the brainstorm, select and connect ideas. Plan and structure the answer. The plan will display pattern of the essay as a whole, and where different points are linked. It is easy to see the balance and sequence of the essay. Include references and points to be made. Templates which show how to structure an answer help with planning. Examples are available with Inspiration Software.
4. See www.dyslexiacourses.ie under downloads for tips on Leaving Certificate English Paper 1.
5. **Write.** Now that thinking has been done, the task is to write. The comprehensive plan keeps your writing to the point. Use signposts for the reader to understand the structure such as words like **'however'**, **'next'**, **'finally'**. Don't stop for spelling at this stage. Get your ideas down.
6. **Check.** Proofread three times, once for spelling, once for punctuation and paragraphing, and once to check the content is to the point and well structured.

Here are some ideas which might help with writing.

- Make up one key character and two other people in his/her life. Imagine the person in great detail such as how they look, clothes, hobbies, family, school, jobs, good and bad habits, friends, opinions

- etc. Even collect photos of what they might look like. It makes it easier to compose a short story if you have the characters already in your head.
- Write a sentence about each of your five senses when writing a description of a scene.
 - When answering questions think of 3 points to support your answer, then 2 references /quotes to back up each point.
 - Use the question to start your answer. So if you are asked *What the key causes of climate change?* begin your answer *The key causes of climate change are...*
 - Have checklists of points to prompt you to write more. For example when writing about a person in history, think about clothes, food, farming, houses, rulers, religion, schools, beliefs, death. If the question asks if a piece of a text is humorous, here is a list of points that could act as a checklist.
 - Exaggeration
 - Puns
 - Making fun of one's self
 - Double meanings
 - Irony
 - Black Comedy: making fun of serious issues
 - Misdirection/surprises

Revision

- Students with dyslexia do not cram for exams well. A good revision programme avoids the feeling of being overwhelmed.
- The first step in preparation is to know what is coming up in the exam. Ask teachers for the topics which are to be examined. Check you have the necessary sets of notes, text books and revision books. Make out a master sheet of what has to be done in each subject. Mark off topics as you revise and you see the progress you are making.
- Make out a revision timetable showing each day of the week and the time allocated to study. Then allocate subjects to these times. Ensure that you have time for all your subjects over the week.
- Get up early the morning of an exam and revise. It means the information is fresh in your mind.
- Revision is an active process and involves hard work. The multi-sensory methods of seeing, hearing, listening and writing all help the retention of material learnt.
- Be familiar with past examination papers and how questions are framed. Practise answering questions. When examiners correct papers, they have a marking scheme which shows them what to look for and award marks on the paper. These schemes are available for students to look at on website www.examinations.ie under Examination Material Archive.

Key dates for students

Third Year

- Applications for reasonable accommodations (RACE) in Junior Certificate examination are made in the first term of 3rd year. If you have been granted RACE for the Junior Certificate, check that the school will provide the same accommodation in the Mocks.

Third Year or Transition Year

- Apply to NUI (National University of Ireland) for 3rd language exemption if appropriate. If you are exempt from the study of Irish on the grounds of dyslexia, the 3rd language exemption will be granted. If you are not exempt from Irish, the criteria for the 3rd language exemption are that scores in the assessment report should be at or below the 10th percentile (standard score 81) in two literacy areas.

Sixth Year

- If interested in applying for DARE, make a CAO application by 1st Feb. By March 1st students indicate they wish to be considered for DARE by ticking YES to Q1 and completing section A of the Supplementary Information Form (SIF). By 15th March students should ensure that *Educational Impact Statement* (EIS) and *Evidence of Disability* are completed, signed, stamped and returned to the CAO.
- It is your responsibility to ensure that the CAO are aware if you have language exemptions.

Useful websites for students on study skills, revision notes and exam preparation.

General sites

www.litcharts.com from the creators of Spark notes, have a library of 1,156 literature guides, 130 poetry guides, 136 literary devices and terms, and modern English translations of every Shakespeare play.

www.sparknotes.com

- A range of literature study guides including a wide range of Shakespearian plays and many novels.
- A number of animated video guides to some of the plays (Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, Romeo and Juliet, etc.) and some novels (To Kill a Mockingbird, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, 1984 etc.).
- There are also No Fear Guides for some of the plays (Merchant of Venice, King Lear, Macbeth, Hamlet, etc.) and some novels. These provide the original text on one half of the page, with modern English language version on the other half of the page.
- There are study notes on subjects such as Biology, Chemistry, Economics, Physics, History and Maths. It includes a section on poetry with specific poets such as Dickinson, Donne, Eliot, Frost, and Yeats.

www.shmoop.com Shmoop is an American site whose slogan is 'We speak student'. This refers to a relaxed form of English which is easy to understand. There is a free version which gives access to learning guides in English, Maths and Science. In the Maths section it covers Algebra, Geometry and Calculus. In Science Physics, Biology and Chemistry are covered. The English section covers Grammar, Poetry, well-known novels and bestsellers, and Shakespeare. There is a premium subscription costing \$24.68 a month.

www.studynotes.ie

Includes revision notes, flashcards for key vocabulary, lists of key quotations, videos for JC and LC in a wide range of subjects. There are short animated video summaries based on Spark notes of Hamlet, Macbeth and Romeo and Juliet. Poems in the Irish syllabus are read aloud.

www.studentenrichment.ie

Study tips, templates for goals setting and timetables, links to revision sites.

www.studyclix.ie

This site provides an analysis of past papers in the LC and JC by topic as well as the marking schemes. It also has notes and videos on different topics. However basic access to 2 questions and 2 marking schemes is free. Otherwise it is €35 or €55 depending on the package bought.

Subject specific websites

Business, Accounting, Economics

www.thebusinessguys.ie Free Leaving Certificate notes in business, accounting and economics. Signing up to their mailing list means the student will receive a monthly newsletter during term-time, focusing on one key topic in each of the three Business subjects.

English

www.connemarafm.com/education-programmes/ Connemara FE has podcasts under the heading The West Wind Blows for Leaving Certificate subjects such as English, Chemistry and French. There are pod casts on key poets and some Shakespearian plays.

www.sccenglish.ie

Website for St. Columba's English Department. Look for podcasts in the menu. It covers poetry, drama, essays and includes podcasts on key texts for the LC such as Hamlet, King Lear and MacBeth. An example is Podcast 21 which is the third in a series of 6 podcasts on King Lear which are about 10 minutes each. This Podcast features 10 quotations and examines the quotations as key moments in the play, linking them to the rest of the text and prompting fresh reflection on the themes and characters. Podcast 24 is about patterns in poetry.

History

www.historymatters365.com

This website has been created as a resource for Irish secondary school history students and teachers. The site is a mix of videos, images, notes, links, inter-activities, a blog, etc.

Languages

www.duolingo.com

This site provides interactive learning of languages in progressive stages with writing and speaking exercises. Languages include Irish, French, Spanish, German and Italian.

www.memrise.com (iOS and Android)

Memrise focuses on teaching languages to students and uses visual flashcards to help them remember words and phrases for many different languages. Although the app focuses on languages it can be used to learn geography, history and sciences.

Maths

www.alison.com

Free on-line course in Project Maths with video tutorials of lessons at JC and LC levels in both ordinary and higher levels. The site also covers topics in Physics and Chemistry.

Science

www.biodigital.com (iOS and Android) The Biodigital Human allows thousands of 3D visualisations of the anatomy of the human body. Available free or with additional features at a premium rate.

www.theconicalflask.ie. This site offers video lessons, notes and model questions and solutions in the subjects of Agricultural Science, JC science, Biology and Chemistry.

www.periodicvideos.com Interactive website for the Periodic Table.

www.thephysicsteacher.ie Study notes in JC Science, LC Physics and Applied Maths with some material on Biology.

www.sciencequiznet.weebly.com/ This site offers quizzes to help with revision in Junior Biology, Physics and Chemistry and Senior Physics and Chemistry.