

nasen:

A whole school approach to improving access, participation and achievement

Taken from A Whole School Approach to Improving Access, Participation and Achievement

Information sheet 4

Guidelines to support a dyslexia friendly environment

Below are a few ideas for making your classroom more dyslexia friendly. This is not an exhaustive list and it should be remembered that every pupil will have different needs and favourite ways of recording, etc. Don't forget to ask the pupil what works for him/her.

Ideas for print and layout of text on the page

- Use off-white for paper and screen backgrounds on computers and interactive whiteboards. (Some pupils prefer pastel colours, while others prefer cream. Where possible, offer white or colour as a matter of course, so pupils have a choice).
- Use a minimum of 12 pt or ideally 14 pt type in written text.
- Use fonts like Arial that are rounded and reflect a cursive script.
- Keep lines left justified with a ragged right edge.
- Use a line space between paragraphs to break up text.
- Use wide margins and headings to break up text.
- Use images (pictures and/or symbols) to support text.
- Use bold to highlight, as italics or underlining can make words appear to run together.
- Where possible, use bulleted or numbered lists rather than continuous prose.
- Write clear, concise sentences and instructions.
- Keep sentence length to a minimum.
- The active rather than the passive voice increases readability.
- Use flow charts to represent information visually wherever possible.
- Keep paragraphs short, with headings and sub-headings.

- Use, and encourage pupils to use, alternative ways of recording:
 - Drawing
 - Diagrams
 - Voice recording
 - Video
 - Annotated still photographs.
- Encourage pupils to use structured approaches such as mapping ideas out under different headings.
- Multi-sensory approaches, e.g. making things visual and, where appropriate, using 'concrete' objects, so that pupils can touch and smell.
- Make sure pupils have 'buddies' to support them at appropriate times, e.g. when they are tackling a task in an area that they are not confident in.
- Build pupils' confidence through working from the known – e.g. using or making resources based on pupils' own experiences and that use familiar vocabulary, or developing vocabulary and understanding through modelling, questioning and asking for clarification.
- Use frequent targeted praise as pupils achieve objectives. This may need to be discreet.
- Always give out homework or other independent study tasks well before the end of the lesson, and make sure they remain available to pupils. Taking rapid notes accurately at the end of a lesson is not an easy skill to acquire for dyslexic pupils (or many others).
- As discreetly as necessary, make sure dyslexic pupils can see prompts or displays showing ways to form letters and numbers, to help pupils get them the right way round – 'b' and 'd', for example.
- Build in plenty of opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills. Research has clarified the role this has in the development of reading and writing.

Note: You should also be aware of the demands of websites that pupils are likely to use when searching for information. Plan so that pupils use sites that you have checked for accessibility, including the capacity to change the font type and size and the background. It may sometimes be appropriate to encourage pupils to use browsers that allow the searcher to simplify and clarify images and text layout, but this will be a matter for discussion with the SENCO. Similarly, some dyslexic pupils may prefer to use speech support for writing with a computer. Again, you should discuss this with the SENCO. There are more examples of what makes a dyslexia-friendly learning environment on the BDA [website](#) Select 'About Dyslexia?' followed by 'Schools, Colleges & Universities', and then use the contents menu.