

Designing Dyslexia-Friendly Lessons

Everway

The graphic consists of three thick, curved lines that sweep across the bottom half of the slide. The top line is yellow, the middle line is green, and the bottom line is blue. They overlap and cross each other, creating a dynamic, abstract design.

Small and simple adjustments to your teaching practice can make a big difference to learning outcomes.

Here are some actionable steps you can take today:



Give clear instructions

Difficulties with verbal processing and working memory can make it harder to follow instructions. **Be clear with what you're asking students to do.** Model with examples and check for understanding, such as asking students to explain the task back to you. Break down complex tasks into more manageable steps.

Provide lesson previews

Offer students a **high-level overview** of upcoming topics or lessons. This allows time for them to process new material ahead of class and come prepared with questions.

Check for readability

The sharp contrast of pure black text on a pure white background can cause visual disturbance for students with dyslexia. Opt for lower-contrast colours and plain backgrounds. Use white space and line spacing to avoid text overcrowding. Clear fonts with distinct lettering (such as Arial) also support readability.

Make it visual

Help cement key concepts with **visual aids**. Glossaries and word banks reinforce new vocabulary, while visual timelines help to contextualise historical events. **Colour-coding** and mind-maps also support memory by stimulating the brain to recognise patterns and categorise information.

Provide lesson summaries

Help students digest what they have learned with a brief recap. Your summary can include key concepts and new vocabulary.

Create a positive environment

Lead with patience and understanding. Build awareness of neurodiversity and learning differences among staff and students. Develop students' resilience and positive self-image by encouraging them to **identify their learning strengths** and approach challenges with a growth mindset.

Keep open communication

Consistent support from school to home is crucial, and requires teachers to work in tandem with parents/guardians and designated learning support specialists. Regular check-ins also help monitor progress.

Practice active recall

Spaced repetition is great for memory retention (and more engaging than passive study). Start a lesson by asking students to write down everything they recall from the previous lesson. End the lesson by asking students to recall what they learned today. This will help cement new information into long-term memory.

Be flexible with testing methods

When testing subject knowledge, consider alternative formats to standard essays. Could some students demonstrate learning more effectively through an oral presentation or creative project?

Explore access arrangements for exams

Eligible students can be entitled to **reasonable adjustments** such as extra time in exams, alternative rooming arrangements and the use of assistive software such as text-to-speech (also known as a screen-reader). Explore your options and communicate these in advance to the student and parents/guardians.



Reading

Work with smaller reading groups

Struggling readers can benefit from reading aloud in a one-on-one or small group setting. Gradually they can work up to larger group readings as their confidence and fluency develops. Try to avoid correcting reading mistakes in front of the class.

Allow extra time

If students are feeling rushed or pressurised, they are less likely to extract all the information they need from a text.

Make use of reading aids

Audiobooks can widen access to literature and higher-level vocabulary for students who struggle with extensive reading. Text-to-speech tools (such as Read&Write) read written text aloud and can be used in documents, PDFs, websites and even images.

Writing

Minimise copying requirements

Copying out notes from the board or textbook can overload a student's working memory and place barriers in the way of real learning. Provide notes in printed or digital form and look for deeper ways of engaging with material.

Provide prompts

A blank page can be daunting for students with dyslexia. Sentence starters can be a helpful starting point, while writing scaffolds can guide students to think more carefully about how they structure their writing.

Make use of writing aids

Students with dyslexia can find writing a barrier to expressing their thoughts clearly. Speech-to-text (dictation) tools help students get their thoughts into writing, without the interruption of spelling or punctuation worries. Predictive text tools also assist with writing flow and vocabulary-building.

Everway

Helping everyone to understand and be understood