

Dyslexia Accommodations Guide

Everway



This guide was adapted from “Examples of Effective Accommodations” in AUSPELD, Understanding Learning Difficulties – A Practical Guide. (2021, pp. 40–46) and expanded to include the technological aspects and practical applications to the classroom. It was created with the collaboration of Kathryn Smart, Specialist Dyslexia and ADHD Educational Consultant at Alphability, and Jenni McDonald, Principal at Department of Education, Queensland.

Challenge	Recommended no/low-tech accommodations	Recommended tech-based accommodations	Features to use  Read&Write  OrbitNote  Equatio	How do these features help the student and teacher?
Working Memory Difficulty retaining information Difficulty holding multiple pieces of information in mind and using that information Difficulty processing lengthy requirements or instructions	• Clear, simple instruction using visuals to support memory. • Where possible, use dual-coding to support two sensory pathways to retain information. This can include using images or simple sign language. • Break complex instructions down into ‘First... / Then...’ format. • Check for understanding by asking students to explain what they need to do, particularly if they are off-task.	• Present information or instructions in bullet points. Include visuals and short videos as appropriate, particularly if it is modelling something the student needs to be able to complete. • Keep slides/pages simple with consistent, dyslexia-friendly fonts and plain, pastel-coloured backgrounds that contrast less harshly with the text colour. This helps ensure pages are readable and reduces visual fatigue. • Make use of text-to-speech tools which can read aloud information to reduce memory load.	 Voice Note  Text-to-Speech  Push Pin (available in OrbitNote)	Voice Note offers a handy way for students to answer (or ask) questions, elaborate on their answers and show their understanding. Students don’t have to focus on spelling, sentence structure or typing. This enables the student to draw connections along the way as they gradually form the big picture. If they forget anything, they can go back and listen to their voice note. Teachers can also use voice notes to explain concepts or vocabulary, helping to reduce working memory load. Text-to-Speech reduces the load on working memory and frees up more space for comprehension and connecting ideas. Push Pin annotations are great way to scaffold tasks with guiding notes without cluttering the page. It helps students break tasks into chunks and offers a place to add useful vocabulary.
Processing Speed Slow visual processing speed Slow auditory processing speed	• Provide additional time to complete work. Use scaffolds and chunking to guide the student and avoid overload. • Use direct, explicit instruction with modelling for complex tasks. • Allow processing time with questions and discussions. Use repetition and simple phrasing. • Where possible, use pre-planned questions or write key talking points as the lesson goes. This offers a visual support (dual-coding) and more processing opportunities.	• Adjust fonts and backgrounds to reduce contrast. This reduces load on visual processing. • Add visuals, diagrams and short videos to text to improve comprehension. • Use voice-to-text tools.	 Text-to-Speech  Screenshot Reader  Talk & Type  Text-to-Speech	Text-to-Speech reduces load on visual processing to free up memory and cognitive functions. The Screenshot Reader can help students to read labels on diagrams and other images taken from the internet. This feature makes text-to-speech available on previously inaccessible images. Talk & Type can help students capture what is being said so they can return to it at their own pace. Students can use Text-to-Speech to hear content repeated or catch up if they are getting lost in the conversation.

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Reading General difficulties with reading comprehension, reading fluency and reading speed Phonemic awareness Difficulty retaining taught phonemes Grapheme/phoneme correspondence (GPC) Difficulty mapping graphemes to phonemes Word recognition Difficulty blending phonemes to make a word; difficulty mapping a word so it no longer needs to be decoded (orthographic mapping) Comprehension Difficulty understanding the meaning of words Rate and prosody Difficulty reading the text so it sounds like spoken language (fluency, expression and pausing)	• Provide systematic phonics instruction, which builds on phonological awareness skills. • Build oral vocabulary by pre-teaching key words for a topic. These can be presented with pictures and used in the context of class discussions and oral vocabulary activities. • When reading for information, provide visuals or videos to support understanding and have an assistant reader if necessary.	• Consider providing audiobooks for novel studies. • Make use of text-to-speech tools when reading on websites/digital sources.	 Text-to-Speech	Text-to-Speech offers dual-coding as the student hears the text spoken aloud as they read along. They are more likely to remember this content, as their attention is focused on the words being highlighted as they are spoken. This improves comprehension, reduces cognitive load and helps students keep up with their peers in class.
		• Explicitly teach the use of highlighting tools to identify keywords and vocabulary.	  Picture Dictionary	The Highlighter feature can be used to isolate graphemes. By working sequentially through short, decodable texts that focus on a particular phoneme, you can help students build phoneme knowledge. Paired with the highlighter feature, this focuses the brain on identifying phonemic sounds and patterns. Use the Picture Dictionary to insert images into the text. This supports comprehension and reduces cognitive load. Adding picture definitions also helps students to actively engage with the text, as they must choose which picture best matches that word.
		• Simplify what is being read by blocking ads or moving the text to a less distracting format. • Use readability websites/apps to make ensure information sources are at an accessible reading age.	   Picture Dictionary	Simplify removes visual distractions that might overwhelm cognitive load and impair comprehension, particularly if the student also has attention difficulties. Students can change the font and colours of a webpage to increase visual processing capacity. Students can use the Dictionary and Picture Dictionary features to quickly look up unfamiliar words.
			 Voice Note	Students can use Voice Note to practise reading sentences and then listen back to how they sound. This helps to improve reading fluency and intonation.

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Oral Language Poor language comprehension Poor expressive language	• Activate prior knowledge on a topic using visual aids such as concept maps, Venn diagrams etc. • Modify questions or tasks with simple, direct language. • Allow the student to have an adult assist them with reading questions in tests or to clarify the meaning of a word.	• Provide short videos to cover the content and new vocabulary. • Use ‘flipped learning’ to pre-teach vocabulary via teacher made-videos or relevant YouTube clips. Students can review these before class and spend time in class using the language or practising the concepts.	 Rewordify  Vocabulary List	Rewordify will simplify a text for better comprehension. It reduces the length and complexity of a text and therefore the cognitive load. Use the Vocabulary List to identify key words in a text and create lists with pictures, definitions, and examples of the word in context. This task helps the student to make conscious connections with the words and decide on a meaning related to the context. Teachers can also create the vocab list and ask the students to individualise it, or ask students to collaborate to complete the definition and put the word in a sentence. This leads to class discussion about the words, meanings and choices to solidify their understanding.
Spelling Difficulty retrieving words when spelling (orthographic mapping); difficulty breaking words into smaller parts (segmenting multisyllabic words)	• Systematic phonics instruction that aligns reading and spelling practice with the same progression of sounds and spellings. • Provide a vocabulary list of key words, with a matching picture, to support writing. • When teaching spelling rules, keep them simple and relevant, plus link them to a story, song or action to help with recall.	• Support spelling rules with short videos or a song/saying. • Use interactive whiteboards to build words by sounds/graphemes, either as a class or in small groups. • Allow students to use speech-to-text or prediction tools in tasks that aren’t directly testing spelling.	 Prediction  Talk&Type  Vocabulary List	Students can personalise their Vocabulary List with spelling supports, such as breaking the word up into syllables/prefixes/suffixes, grouping the words with common graphemes and highlighting the grapheme in the word.
Written Expression Difficulties organising sentences and paragraphs, grammar and punctuation, preventing the demonstration of skills and knowledge	• Provide direct, explicit instruction in writing from sentence structure up to paragraphs. Use scaffolds and note taking skills to build up to writing for tasks or assessments. • Provide a scribe for key learning areas where the student’s verbal knowledge/vocabulary is higher than their written vocabulary. • Model the use of graphic organisers to ‘brain dump’ and organise thoughts before planning them in writing.	• Using mind-mapping to plan for writing. • Use collaborative Google Docs to plan writing in scaffolded templates and use direct feedback from the teacher to improve writing. • Once the writing has been planned and possibly drafted, use speech-to-text/ prediction to put the piece together for publishing.	 Prediction  Free-Hand Drawing (available in OrbitNote)  Shapes Drawing (available in OrbitNote)	Prediction reduces cognitive load, takes away spelling pressures and opens up the possibility for students to express their ideas more freely. Free-Hand Drawing and Shapes Drawing enable students to annotate their work, create diagrams to illustrate concepts, create mind-maps or flow-charts, and more.

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Handwriting Difficulty with pencil grip; slow or illegible handwriting	• Provide hand warm ups/strengthening prior to writing, plus hand stretching breaks. • Link handwriting and letter formation to visual and verbal cues (dual-coding) to support recall. • In assessments/tasks that take time, keep handwriting a separate task from spelling and writing. Have a scribe or assistive technology appropriate to the task or year level. • Students with poor fine motor skills can benefit from supported, hands-on activities that develop this, such as squishing play dough to develop strength.	• Use devices with a stylus to promote correct pencil grip and reduce finger strain. • Speech-to-text tools provide an alternative mode of writing.	 Talk&Type  Free-Hand Drawing (available in OrbitNote)	Students with Motor Dysgraphia may find Talk&Type better than handwriting on a device. Free-Hand Drawing with a stylus enables students to practice handwriting and complete worksheets.
Copying information Difficulty copying information accurately and at speed	• Provide information in a printed/digital format. If notetaking is required, allow extra time and ensure students know how to highlight key points. • Write short notes on the board with spacing, bullet points and different colours to help with tracking. • Ask yourself if copying from the board is the best use of a student’s time. Unless it is just a few sentences or involves drawing a chart or mindmap, it is better to free up students’ cognitive capacity for understanding and drawing connections, rather than copying information.	• Set a timer for taking notes within given time, then allow devices for photographing notes on the board. • Use highlighting tools for notetaking and summarising instead of copying chunks of text.	 Highlighter  Collect Highlights  Vocabulary List  OCR Scanning	For students with poor working memory, there can be high cognitive load in looking up, reading and remembering the spelling of a word. OCR Scanning allows you to convert worksheets into PDFs to annotate or type on. Converting notes from a board, PowerPoint or worksheet to an editable PDF opens up Universal Design opportunities for all students to access the curriculum. They can annotate as needed and be part of the learning without falling behind their peers. With Vocabulary List, students can summarise key words and notes instead of bulk copying.

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Mathematics Difficulty with conceptual understanding and procedural knowledge in mathematics	• Explain mathematical vocabulary and provide visual prompts around the room to help recall of the meaning of words, eg. different words for addition or multiplication used in word problems. • Scaffold mathematical concepts from the foundational skill up to more complex application, achieving mastery at each level before moving on. Model expected steps. • Use a concrete-pictorial-abstract (CPA) approach for mathematical instruction, especially for the introduction of new concepts. This includes using manipulatives even in upper primary or high school. • Make tests start at basic recall/basic arithmetic. Build on this with more complex arithmetic and application. Provide the option to have word problems read to the student.	• Digital tests with text-to-speech function and ability to handwrite working out on the device.	 Free-Hand Drawing (available in OrbitNote)  Shapes Drawing (available in OrbitNote)  Speech Input (available in Equatio)  Prediction (available in Equatio)	OrbitNote brings a new level of accessibility to PDF worksheets and textbooks. Students can use OrbitNote’s reading tools to help with decoding word problems. They can also type or draw answers using the Free-Hand Drawing or Shapes Drawing features. These features remove the added cognitive load of decoding text, enabling more capacity to do the maths. If the student has handwriting difficulties, the Equatio toolbar offers the ability to type out formula using the Prediction feature or dictate their working out with Speech Input.
Attention and Concentration Difficulty sustaining focus and seeing tasks through to completion	• Have a consistent signal to begin or regain focus, whereby students are expected to give full attention to the teacher and/or their work. • Link learning to prior knowledge, real life and the ‘big picture’ of what you are trying to achieve. This provides students with a clear purpose or hook to keep them motivated and engaged. • Keep activities to short bursts and include ‘brain breaks’ that use a different part of the brain to the task at hand. This should be relevant to the students’ age and needs.	• Use short YouTube clips as hooks to connect students with the topic or prior knowledge. • Visual digital timers can support focused work and brain breaks. See example https://pomofocus.io/ • Structure activities as ‘first / then’: as students complete the tasks, they unlock a ‘then’ activity, which can be a brain break or reward.	 Screen-Mask	Helps to block distractions and hone in focus on small area of text when reading.

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Organisation and Planning Difficulty planning and organising tasks, working independently and time management	• Chunk tasks into achievable steps. • Explicitly teach executive functioning skills such as organisation, revising, task prioritisation etc. as part of the learning ahead of assessments. • For younger students, provide visual schedules for the class day. Include picture cues for specific tasks to support memory and focus in multi-stepped tasks. • Keep the classroom organised and labelled to assist all students to find and put away items appropriately.	• Using flow charts and mind mapping tools to plan for writing. • Use collaborative Google Docs to plan projects or writing in scaffolded templates, using direct feedback from the teacher to improve it.	 Free-Hand Drawing and Shapes (available in OrbitNote)  Picture Dictionary	Free-Hand Drawing and Shapes to help with creating flow charts, mind/concept maps. Picture Dictionary to provide dual-coding for younger students as they progress through tasks.
Study Skills Difficulty with summarising and revising learned material	• Assign colours to each subject/topic. • Encourage students to use sticky notes to summarise their notes (a very short sentence or drawing might help). • Ask students to make a list of things that distract them and how to prevent each of these. • Study in 10-20 minute bursts, or using the Pomodoro technique.	• Use Pomodoro-based apps to allow for focused work of manageable time.	 Highlighter  Collect Highlights  Simplify	The Highlighter feature helps students to identify and categorise information. They can Collect Highlights to create organised study notes. With Simplify, they can remove visual distractions and distil material to its essential elements. Together, these support executive functioning skills and retention of learned material.

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Emotional regulation Low self-esteem	• Provide assistive tools to all students in the class so that particular students aren’t singled out. • Share examples of important or successful people with dyslexia, eg. if studying space, share about Maggie Aderin-Pocock, a space scientist with dyslexia. • Social and emotional support programs focusing on positive coping skills and being assertive, with a focus on good role models with dyslexia, either famous or local.			
Cognitive overload	• Chunk tasks or instructions into smaller parts. • Focus on quality rather than quantity with all tasks, writing and class work. • Employ strategies of Retrieval Practice within instruction - spacing, interleaving, metacognition etc.	• See all strategies above	See tools above	All adjustments for students with dyslexia are about reducing cognitive load. If we support students to show their ability without the hindrance of reading, writing or spelling, they can access the curriculum on the same basis as their peers and show what they really know.
Anxiety	• Be conscious of the student’s triggers and recognise anxious body language. • Help students develop their interoception skills so they understand when they feel anxious and how to ask for help. • Anticipate things that might cause anxiety and set in place appropriate supports. This may be as simple as informing the student when this activity is coming up so they can be prepared.	• See all strategies above	See tools above	
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Helping everyone to understand and be understood