

Dyslexia Factsheet



Dyslexia is a lifelong, genetic, neurological Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD) which primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling. It affects all genders, ethnicities and social groups, and its impact can range from mild to severe.



It is a specific learning difficulty because it only impacts particular aspects of learning and is not connected to intellectual ability. Some people prefer to use the term Specific Learning Difference.



There can be early indicators of dyslexia such as slower acquisition of speech and language skills, but it is usually first noticeable when a child struggles to learn literacy skills. Formal diagnosis is not needed for support to be put in place at school.



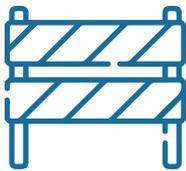
Dyslexia is a hidden disability and many of the signs of dyslexia are not obvious in the way depression, anxiety or a physical disability can be. It is most visible in the impact it can have on reading and writing skills, but it can also have a less visible impact upon information processing and working memory. This affects the amount of information that someone can remember and the speed with which they can access and recall information.



In adults, challenges with reading, writing, and spelling may be hidden. Most will have good coping strategies, but tasks which need these skills will require more time and effort than might be expected and the impact this has on an individual can often go unseen. Some may try to avoid these tasks wherever possible.



There are some common traits associated with dyslexia, but it is important to understand that it affects everyone differently, and each person will have their own unique profile of strengths and challenges. Dyslexia often occurs with other specific learning difficulties such as dyscalculia or dyspraxia/DCD which also impact upon an individual's profile.



Dyslexia can present daily barriers in education, in the workplace and in life, and many find it hard to thrive in a system that often fails to recognise, value, or encourage them. They may feel shame for their differences, which may be misinterpreted as lack of ability, laziness or conduct issues. This can have a big impact upon their confidence and self-esteem, as well as limiting life choices.



A diagnosis can be made by a Specialist Teacher Assessor with an Assessment Practicing Certificate (APC) or an HCPC registered Educational Psychologist but diagnosis is not routinely carried out at school. Cost can be a prohibitive factor and many dyslexic people are never formally diagnosed.



Simple changes or adjustments at school and in the workplace based on individual needs can have a big impact on the lives of dyslexic people.

More information about Dyslexia can be found on our website:

www.bdadyslexia.org.uk

bdadyslexia.org.uk

British Dyslexia Association is a registered charity in England and Wales (289243).
Registered in England and Wales as a company limited by guarantee (1830587).

Definition of Dyslexia

The BDA has adopted the Delphi definition of dyslexia (March 2025):

Dyslexia is a set of processing difficulties that affect the acquisition of reading and spelling.

In dyslexia, some or all aspects of literacy attainment are weak in relation to age, standard teaching and instruction, and level of other attainments.

Across all languages, difficulties in reading fluency and spelling are key markers of dyslexia.

Dyslexic difficulties exist on a continuum and can be experienced to various degrees of severity.

The nature and developmental trajectory of dyslexia depends on multiple genetic and environmental influences.

Dyslexia can affect the acquisition of other skills, such as mathematics, reading comprehension or learning another language.

The most commonly observed cognitive impairment in dyslexia is a difficulty in phonological processing (i.e., in phonological awareness, phonological processing speed or phonological memory). However, phonological difficulties do not fully explain the variability that is observed.

Working memory, processing speed and orthographic skills can contribute to the impact of dyslexia.



Facts and Figures



This means that dyslexia affects 10% of the population. That's around 6.7 million people in the UK.

OVER
1 Million

school children in the UK have dyslexia. **Many** are undiagnosed.

OVER
3.3 Million

adults in the workplace. **Many** are undiagnosed.

bdadyslexia.org.uk

British Dyslexia Association is a registered charity in England and Wales (289243).
Registered in England and Wales as a company limited by guarantee (1830587).