

# Dyslexia

## What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability (dyspraxia and dyscalculia are other examples of specific learning disability). A specific learning disability is a neurological condition (that is, related to the way your brain works). It is not related to intelligence: a person with a specific learning disability might have an average or high score on a formal intelligence assessment. A specific learning disability impacts on the way you learn and process information.

## How does dyslexia affect me?

Dyslexia affects the way you process written text and this has an impact on your reading and writing. Some people mix up letters in words, or mix up words in sentences. Reading takes a lot of effort, and you may have to read a paragraph multiple times to understand and remember its meaning.

Many people with dyslexia have significant difficulties with spelling. You may find that you write the word you can spell rather than the word you think is the best one for the context. Some people find it hard to get their thoughts on the page; sometimes they find it easier to draw mind maps or to verbally describe what they want to say rather than write it.

Dyslexia can also affect the way you process, store and recall information. You may have difficulties with memory, planning and organisation. You may also find that you take longer to do some study tasks than other students.

Every dyslexic person is different and you may recognise that you have some of these difficulties but not others.

## How do I know if I have dyslexia?

Dyslexia is diagnosed through a detailed assessment with an educational psychologist. If you have had this type of assessment, please bring the report with you if you wish to register at Disability Services.

If you are concerned that you experience some of the issues described above, but you have not had a formal assessment diagnosing dyslexia, make an appointment with Learning Services or Disability Services staff to discuss your concerns.

***See next page for study suggestions***

## Suggestions for successful learning and study

### Reading

- Find out from your tutor what is the most important article, chapter or book in your required course reading and read that first.
- Make an appointment with Learning Services to learn about effective reading strategies such as highlighting, skimming and scanning so you can make the best use of your reading time.
- Use Read and Write Gold software (on Ara computers) to read your online documents aloud to you. Ask Disability Services for more information.
- Borrow etexts from the library or purchase them so that you can use read-aloud functions on ereaders or make use of screen reading software.
- Record key information from your reading using your preferred method: highlighting, written or typed notes, mind maps or other visual diagrams, or recording yourself speaking.

### Writing

- Typing your work gives you access to a spell checker to help with your spelling.
- Read and Write Gold software (on Ara computers) has an informative and helpful spell checker. Ask at Disability Services for more information.
- Make an appointment at Learning Services to get help with skills such as planning and writing your assignment, essay and report writing and notetaking skills.
- If it is hard to get started writing an assignment, use a strategy to start your thoughts flowing:
  - put all your first thoughts on the page by writing or typing: edit it later
  - draw a mind map or diagram to plan your response, or use mind mapping software
  - record what you want to say first, then use that audio to guide your writing
- Ask a friend, or use the read-aloud function on Read and Write Gold, to read your draft assignment back to you. This will help you identify errors that your mind skips over when you read silently.
- When powerpoint hand-outs are available on Moodle, print these out before class: read through them before you go to class and use them to help you take effective notes in class.
- Talk to Disability Services about options and strategies if you find it difficult to take notes in your classes or if you find reading and writing difficult for tests and exams.

### Organisation and memory

- Find out what works for you, for instance, a study planner poster or the organiser on your phone, and use this to keep track of your assessment dates and study process. Disability Services may be able to assist you with this.
- Learning Services can help you develop planning and study strategies. Learning Services can also assist you with developing effective learning and memory techniques.

**Contact Disability Services:** Phone: 940 8089

Email: [disability@ara.ac.nz](mailto:disability@ara.ac.nz)

### ***For more information:***

Dyslexia Foundation: <http://www.dyslexiafoundation.org.nz/>

Study strategies:

[http://services.unimelb.edu.au/disability/resources/towards\\_success/learning\\_disabilities](http://services.unimelb.edu.au/disability/resources/towards_success/learning_disabilities)

Information about dyslexia: <http://www.brainhe.com/students/types/dyslexia.html>