

# What is dyspraxia?

Dyspraxia, a form of developmental coordination disorder (DCD), is a common disorder that causes problems in planning/execution, poor motor coordination, attention and perception. People with dyspraxia often find the routine daily tasks of life such as driving, household chores, cooking and grooming difficult.

Visit [dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk](http://dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk) for more information.

## Key difficulties faced by the dyspraxic learner

People with dyspraxia usually have a combination of problems that can affect:

- Gross motor coordination skills (large movements) e.g. poor balance, poor posture, fatigue, poor integration of two sides of the body, poor hand-eye coordination, lack of rhythm, clumsy gait and movements and tendency to fall, trip and bump into things/people
- Fine motor coordination skills (small movements) e.g. lack of manual dexterity, poor manipulative skills, inadequate grasp, and difficulty with dressing and grooming
- Poorly established hand dominance e.g. may use either hand for different tasks at different times
- Speech and language e.g. may talk continuously and repeat themselves, may have unclear speech, or uncontrolled pitch, volume and rate, difficulty with organising content and sequence of their language
- Eye movements e.g. tracking, difficulty in following a moving object smoothly with eyes without moving head excessively, tendency to lose place when reading, and poor relocating
- Perception (interpretation of the different senses) e.g. poor visual perception, over sensitive to light, little sense of time, speed, distance or weight, inadequate sense of direction, over or under sensitive to touch and noise, lack of awareness of body position, and poor map reading skills
- Learning, thought and memory e.g. difficulty in planning/organising thought, poor short-term memory, accuracy problems, unfocused

and erratic, difficulty in following instructions, difficulty with concentration, slow to finish a task, sequencing problems, may do only one thing at a time properly

## Strategies to support the dyspraxic learner

- ✓ Use word processor/voice recognition software/text to speech software
- ✓ Rehearse movements in small stages
- ✓ Proformas given in advance (e.g. axes already drawn)
- ✓ Scribe for exams if it is impossible to gain accuracy
- ✓ Minimise busy visual information
- ✓ Become aware of body language
- ✓ Talk aloud through thought processes
- ✓ Rephrase points
- ✓ Maintain eye contact
- ✓ Show that you can usually go back and 'fix it'
- ✓ Use headphones to minimise distractions
- ✓ Give copies of power point presentations
- ✓ Ask colleagues not to interrupt unless urgent
- ✓ Adults to appreciate the need for movement/doodling and verbalising thoughts
- ✓ Processes chunked: pupils learn one stage before progressing to the next
- ✓ Training in attention
- ✓ Key words/lists
- ✓ Spider charts for pre-planning
- ✓ Training on how to make notes/instructions on how to précis

## **Strategies to support the dyspraxic learner (cont.)**

- ✓ Build rigid structures for organisation and time management
- ✓ Use post it notes/diaries
- ✓ Pupils to prioritise – 'traffic light' system
- ✓ Use timers and alarms on mobile phones
  - ✓ Use stress balls, rest breaks, reader, extra time for examinations

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