



# Embracing Neurodiversity

Introduction to Dyslexia:  
Challenges & Strengths



Neurodiversity UK

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## Dyslexia

Dyslexia is one of the most common neurodivergent conditions, affecting how a person processes written and spoken language. While often associated with difficulties in reading, writing, and spelling, dyslexia extends beyond literacy challenges. It reflects a different way of processing information, with unique strengths as well as obstacles. Importantly, intelligence is not affected by dyslexia, and many individuals demonstrate exceptional creativity, problem-solving ability, and innovative thinking.

It is estimated that 1 in 10 people are dyslexic to some degree, meaning schools and workplaces are highly likely to include dyslexic individuals. Recognising both the challenges and the strengths associated with dyslexia allows us to better support learning, reduce stigma, and nurture the talents of those who “think differently.”

## Key Facts

- Dyslexia is more frequently diagnosed in males than females, with studies indicating a ratio ranging from 2:1 to as high as 15:1 in clinical or referral samples, though research samples show smaller ratios; boys typically have a prevalence rate between 18%-22%, while for girls it's 8%-13%.
- Dyslexia is highly hereditary. If a birth parent has dyslexia, there is about a 40%-60% chance that their child will also have dyslexia.
- Dyslexia is a language-based learning difficulty that affects reading, writing, and spelling. It can also impact memory, organisation, and even mathematical skills for some. Dyslexia occurs on a continuum, meaning it can range from mild to severe and its impact can change over a person's life.
- Dyslexia is very common, affecting between 10-20% of the population, or about 1 in 5 people. It is the most common learning disability and accounts for the majority of reading and writing difficulties in children.

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## Common Challenges with Dyslexia

While experiences differ from person to person, some common areas of difficulty include:

- **Reading and Literacy:** Difficulty decoding written text, misreading words, or reading more slowly than peers.
- **Spelling and Writing:** Struggles with spelling consistency, written organisation, or grammar.
- **Memory and Recall:** Challenges with short-term memory, sequencing, or remembering instructions.
- **Time Management:** Difficulty organising tasks, planning ahead, or estimating how long something will take.
- **Processing Speed:** Needing additional time to process information, particularly when instructions are given verbally or quickly.

These challenges are linked to differences in how the brain processes language and symbols, not to a person's ability or intelligence.



## Strengths of Dyslexia

Many dyslexic individuals demonstrate exceptional skills that are highly valuable in education, creative industries, science, and business. Strengths often include:

- **Creativity and Innovation:** Dyslexic people often excel in creative thinking, producing original ideas, artistic work, or entrepreneurial solutions.
- **Big-Picture Thinking:** Ability to see patterns, concepts, and systems rather than getting lost in detail.
- **Problem-Solving:** Bringing unconventional, “out of the box” approaches to tricky problems.

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- **Oral Communication:** Many dyslexic individuals are strong verbal communicators, able to explain ideas clearly and persuasively.
- **3D and Spatial Reasoning:** Strengths in design, engineering, architecture, and other fields needing strong visual-spatial skills

These characteristics can be particularly beneficial in fields such as data analysis, research, engineering, IT, mathematics, quality assurance, and the creative arts.

## Dyslexia in Education

In education, dyslexia can impact reading, writing, and traditional classroom learning. As many school systems place heavy emphasis on literacy, dyslexic students may risk being misunderstood or underestimated.



## Common Classroom Challenges

- Reading aloud in class can cause anxiety.
- Written tasks take longer and may appear weaker than oral contributions.
- Instructions given only in written or spoken form may be difficult to process.
- Standardised tests relying on speed and writing may disadvantage dyslexic learners.

## Strategies to Support Dyslexic Students

- **Multisensory learning:** Use visual, auditory, and practical methods alongside text-based work.
- **Technology support:** Text-to-speech software, audiobooks, and dyslexia-friendly fonts.
- **Chunking information:** Break tasks and reading into smaller, manageable parts.
- **Extra processing time:** Allow students longer to read, write, or complete assessments.
- **Strength-based opportunities:** Encourage oral presentations, creative projects, or visual design work to showcase talents.

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## Building inclusion in Education

Building inclusion in schools for dyslexic students means creating learning environments that acknowledge and support diverse needs, with practical adjustments to teaching and resources so every student can thrive. By incorporating multisensory and structured lesson plans, using assistive technology, and providing dyslexia-friendly materials, educators can minimise barriers and promote participation for dyslexic learners. Fostering positive relationships, recognising individual strengths, and encouraging peer support ensure that dyslexic students feel valued and confident, benefitting not only them but the whole school community.

## Dyslexia in the Workplace

In professional settings, dyslexia can impact organisation, written communication, and speed of processing. However, with the right adjustments, employees with dyslexia often bring significant strengths to their teams.

- **Valued skills:** Innovation, problem-solving, creativity, and strong interpersonal communication.
- **Practical adjustments:** Use of screen readers, speech-to-text tools, clear written instructions, or dyslexia-friendly formats (fonts, background colours, spacing).
- **Environmental considerations:** More time for written tasks, option for oral instead of written reports, or extra clarity in instructions.
- **Cultural benefit:** Inclusive workplaces celebrate diverse thinking, encouraging bold ideas and fresh perspectives.



# Rethinking Dyslexia

Dyslexia is not simply about difficulty with reading—it is about different cognitive wiring. While traditional education and workplaces often emphasise linear literacy skills, dyslexic individuals frequently excel in areas requiring imagination, big-picture thinking, and innovation.

By shifting perspective to value these skills and providing practical supports, we not only enable dyslexic individuals to succeed but also enrich schools, workplaces, and society at large.

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