

Dyslexia and Reading



Children who have dyslexia can find reading particularly hard, and can at times lose heart as they tackle words on a page. It's important that we ensure our sessions are as much fun as possible, tailoring book choices and the style of the sessions to children's needs. We know there is no one way of reading, so getting creative and thinking outside the box on how to best support your young reader is key. Through fun and relaxed sessions, you will have the opportunity to help shape what reading means to a child with dyslexia and what it feels like, having a lasting impact on their life.

What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a learning difference that generally affects information processing, particularly in the areas of reading and writing. Dyslexic people might have difficulties with spelling and decoding written information, and remembering information they read, see or hear. Other areas of their life might be impacted too e.g. their organisational skills. It is key to remember that often dyslexic people show strengths in other fields, for example they may develop stronger reasoning skills, as well as being more visual and creative abilities (<https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/dyslexia/about-dyslexia/what-is-dyslexia>).

Signs and symptoms

- **Words swimming/jumping around the page**
- **Word reversal ('was' as 'saw', 'on' as 'no')**
- **Tiredness**
- **Not retaining word**

N.B. Not all children will be aware that they are experiencing symptoms as their reading experience is normal to them. Always remember to be gentle and considerate in how you approach a reading session with a child who may be struggling with dyslexia.

We're not there to diagnose. We are sharing this information so that you are aware of some of the signs. If you ever have concerns about a child, the right thing to do is to speak about it with your Team Leader directly.

Choosing books

- Consider individual interests.
- Be careful not to use 'baby' books with older struggling readers. Match the interest age of an older reader with the reading level of a younger one.
- The contrast between black and white can be tricky for some readers with dyslexia. Ideally look for pages with a yellowed background or use a colour overlay.
- Font: look for books where the spaces between the characters and words are very clear. A larger font also helps support reading.
- Layout: Look for text that reads left to right and top to bottom, with the point size even and text level. This helps readers know where to start, how to continue and their eyes and minds can process more comfortably.
- If a child is struggling try other formats: e.g. recommending and validating the place of audio, graphic novels, shorter books and so on. Remember, above all we want books to be fun!
- A wordless picture book can make for a liberating reading session, and let a reader enjoy a story in a different way. Visual literacy is important, as are sequencing skills. Don't discount the power of engaging with a story through conversation and thought.
- Look for specific publishers (e.g. Barrington Stoke) or talk to your Team Leader, as we might be able to provide dyslexia-friendly books if needed.

Barrington Stoke publish 'accessible, enjoyable and unpatronising short books for children who are dyslexic, struggling to read, or simply reluctant to read' – they often feature a 'super readable' sticker on the front of the book. They have older content in easier language to engage better with a child's age. Their pages are light yellow to help focus.

If you wanted to look for more good sources for dyslexia friendly books, some can be found at:

[The Dyslexia shop](#)

[Love Reading 4 Kids](#)

During a reading session

- A child has probably had a tiring day at school with lots of de-coding going on and the last thing they might want is to look at more books! Where this seems to be the case keep the reading session fun for them, and perhaps just read to them unless they're very keen to read.
- Encourage children to make pictures in their heads as they read to help with understanding. Chat about how you both picture the story, characters, setting and so on.
- Perhaps look at the reading book they have from school and if they are concentrating on a phonic rule – for example 'sh' or 'ch' - point that out when you come to it or ask them to say it... but again, a gentle touch is needed.
- If a child is struggling remember that many dyslexic children aren't aware that words are swimming/jumping – it's just normal for them. Try placing a finger or a bookmark under each line as you read so that they can follow the text. Ask if that makes it easier.
- Make a game of it! You can do the heavy lifting with the reading but try encouraging the child to read the last sentence of every paragraph (or a similar appropriate division).
- Have a chat about the book, ask the child's opinions and make the story relatable to them. This will give them a chance to take a break from reading whilst also stimulating their imagination and build their conversational skills.
- Don't be afraid to repeat or recap on key bits of the plot which you fear the child might have missed. This will help them better understand and ultimately enjoy the story. Rereading specific words can help with assimilating new vocabulary and improving memory too.
- If children would prefer to read on their own/silently, you can always check in with them by asking how they're finding their book. If you get a sense the book they are reading is too hard for them, you could always prepare an easier alternative for next time, without making it too obvious.
- Praise them as they read a tricky word or sentence.

Signs with some ideas on how to respond to them

Immediately forgetting what has just been read.

Gently point out that they have seen the word before and what it said.

Slower reading speed.

Read a sentence yourself to illustrate how it sounds.

Incorrect observation of punctuation e.g. Tom stopped suddenly. Running towards him was a ferocious dog.

Gently point out the punctuation and repeat the sentence.

Missing out words, missing the end of a word or losing track of which line they are reading.

Reread words concentrating on the ending, use a bookmark to track.

Becoming tired while reading.

Share the reading. Reading to them can release some of the tension around reading and make it fun for them, which ultimately is what is most important. Listening to you read can still help them build their vocabulary, increase concentration and improve their memory, whilst also using their imagination and bringing stories to life.