

## FACTSHEET 17: STUDY TIPS FOR STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA

Dyslexia may mean that you learn in a different way. While dyslexia may affect your reading, writing and spelling, it might also be hard to remember new information or to be organised. Even when you work harder than others in the class, it may be a struggle to get good results. You may know more than you can put down on paper. The assessment report shows learning strengths and weaknesses. Using your strengths, it is possible to find alternative ways to learn. Find out what works for you when accessing information, storing it in your memory and showing what you know. Pick out what will work for you from the tips below. Your teachers are there to support you. Ask them for help and advice. There is a form called 'Asking for Help' which is available on the download section of the website [www.dyslexiacourses.ie](http://www.dyslexiacourses.ie). This helps you pinpoint exactly what supports would help in the classroom and communicate them to teachers.

### Organisation.

- Study at a desk/table with plenty of room, shelves for files and books and with all necessary equipment present, such as staplers, highlighters, colour pens, etc.
- Take small breaks during the study period.
- Colour code the subjects in your timetable.
- Use the same colours for your files/copies, e.g. yellow for English, red for Maths.
- Have a 'housekeeping' day once a week where bags are cleared and notes are filed. If necessary, include the organisation of your locker in school.
- Always put the subject, date and topic as a heading on notes. Don't fold them.
- Have no distractions in study area such as TV or mobile.
- A calendar on the wall, with key dates for exams, school work, sports and social life.
- Study/revision timetable on the wall. This should be one that you **can** keep to. The website [www.studentenrichment.ie](http://www.studentenrichment.ie) has templates with blank timetables.
- Use the homework journal to take down homework and to pack the bag for the next day.

### Motivation

- Study at the same time and in the same place so a routine is established.
- A tidy and organised study area helps you settle. It also avoids wasted time looking for items.
- Have a 'to do' list on the wall, so if you think of something, you can write it down. Have a revision plan detailing all topics for revision for an exam. Mark them off as you revise and see your progress.
- Motivation grows on success, so planning and meeting targets will encourage you.
- Use multi-sensory methods to learn. This means activities such as writing, highlighting, talking or making mindmaps. It is harder to be distracted if learning is activity based.
- Set clear goals. Long term goals are key life objectives such as getting the points for your chosen course in college. Medium term goals are the stages in getting to that point such as results in house exams. Short term goals are for this evening's study period. SMART goals help use study time in the most effective way. Again the website [www.studentenrichment.ie](http://www.studentenrichment.ie) has templates for long, medium and short term goal setting.
- Build in rewards for meeting goals, such as small treats like a small break or cup of coffee.

### SMART Goals

SMART goals are:

**Specified:** Sets out exactly what is to do and when.

**Measurable:** Criteria for knowing you have achieved the goal.

**Action based:** What are the actions you need to do?

**Realistic:** It is possible for you to achieve the result within the time.

**Time-based:** Sets the time frame to achieve the goal.

Instead of a goal such as 'To read over the chapter on the Reformation three times' SMART goals are statements such as:

- To learn 15 new words in French, their gender and spelling. (20 minutes)
- To learn 5 reasons for the Reformation, 6 key facts about Luther's life and 5 key beliefs he had. (25 minutes)
- To draw a picture of a microscope and label the ten key parts of it. (25 minutes)

## Reading

Reading is a key skill for second level and for college.

- Reading improves, the more you read. Reading regularly will develop reading stamina, speed and comprehension. Read for 20 minutes a day as a routine. Find reading material that you are interested in whether it is newspapers, magazines or books.
- If it helps, use a ruler to keep your eye on the line of text. Have a pen or highlighter in your hand.
- It reduces errors in reading if you say the words quietly to yourself. This way you see and hear the words on the page. Particularly useful in the stress of the exam.
- Ask for advice if you are given lengthy reading lists so you can identify the key texts to read.
- Get tapes of English texts so you can listen as well as read the text. Look at the websites listed at the end of this Factsheet. There are video summaries of Shakespearian plays and No Fear Guides which have the original text and a modern English translation side by side. There are revision notes and on-line tutorials in lots of subjects.
- Use a reading method for texts such as SQ3R.

## SQ3R Reading Method

SQ3R stands for Survey, Question, Read, Recite and Review and is a reading method to improve comprehension. It involves the following steps.

- **Survey** the text by looking at title, headings, pictures, opening and closing paragraph.
- **Question** what you expect to know after reading the text.
- **Read** actively looking for answers to your questions.
- **Recite.** See if you can answer the questions raised. The more senses involved in reciting, the more likely the learning is stick. Triple strength learning involves seeing, saying and hearing. Quadruple strength learning involves the addition of writing.
- **Review.** In the following days and weeks check you can still answer the questions.

## Spelling/Vocabulary

- Have a dictionary to help with new vocabulary. Put a tab for each section beginning with a new letter and have a bookmark with an alphabet on it so you can find words easily. Newer dictionaries have the alphabet printed on each page.
- Develop mnemonics for spelling words you confuse.
  - Dilemma Emma has a **dilemma**
  - Separate There is a **rat** in **separate**
- Keep a vocabulary notebook for each subject.
- Become a word detective. Lots of longer words come from Latin and Greek. If you understand their meanings, you may be able to understand new words you might come across. For example, if *aqua* = *water*, *phobia* = *fear*, *hydro* = *water*, *bi* = *two*, *lateral* = *side*, *-cide* = *killing*, you might be able to guess the meaning of the following:
  - Aquaphobia, hydrophobia,
  - Hydrotherapy,
  - Bilateral, multilateral,
  - Herbicide, infanticide, insecticide.

This is particularly relevant to Science subjects such as Biology.

## Notetaking

- Revision books can help if you find it difficult to summarise textbooks.
- Can you bypass taking notes in class so you can concentrate on understanding what is being said. This can be done by photocopying the notes of another student or ask the teacher for notes.

- When taking notes, mark words you cannot spell and move on. Ask the teacher later.
- Go over the notes that night, and redo them if legibility is a problem.
- Ask for time to take notes/diagrams in class. Any possibility of taking a photo with your phone?
- Use plenty of space, headings, colour and bullet points when making notes.
- Take time to make good notes/mindmaps as they can help in structuring answers.
- Graphic Organisers and Mindmaps help organise your thinking, help when learning/memorising material and then help in structuring written answers. The Assistive Technology Outreach Service at UCC has online videos showing how to make use of mindmaps. ([www.ucc.ie/en/dss/callouts/resources/videos](http://www.ucc.ie/en/dss/callouts/resources/videos)).

## Learning

- Facts/notes need to go from short term into long term memory. This involves hard work to make the material your own. This does not happen by reading alone. It means changing the channel the information comes in by talking, listening, debating, drawing, visualising, writing or making mindmaps or flashcards.
- You need to understand what you are learning as rote learning is not likely to work for you.
- If there are specific facts, dates, definitions or words to be learnt, make study cards with the new word on one side and the explanation on the other side. Keep them in a box and test yourself often.
- Mnemonics are devices for helping to memorise key facts. An example is **FATDAD** (Fermanagh, Antrim, Tyrone, Derry, Armagh, Down) for the 6 counties of Northern Ireland or **Richard of York gave battle in vain** (Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo and Violet) for the colours of the rainbow.
- Visualisation means making a mental image of a text, making pictures in your mind's eye. Here is an example. *The colours in the wires in the electric plug are blue, green/yellow, and brown. See the image of a Teddybear (brown for the live wire,) on green grass (green for the earth wire) and a blue sky (blue for the neutral).*
- It is only possible to memorise a limited number of unrelated facts, so organising a list of facts into groups help.

## Writing

Writing involves so many tasks, which the student with dyslexia finds difficult, that there is often a mismatch between oral and written work. Written answers may be too short, lack fluency or do not answer the question asked. When you concentrate on the writing rules such as spelling, handwriting and punctuation, ideas suffer. When you are thinking and making interesting connections, the writing skills suffer. Divide the task into five stages.

1. **Understanding the question.** Take time to analysis the question and understand what is being asked. This is important. Very often students with dyslexia will start to write everything they know about a subject down, rather than using their information to answer the question being asked.
2. **Brainstorm.** With an empty sheet of paper, put down all ideas that come into your head with your mind running free and making associations.
3. **Planning.** Using the brainstorm, select and connect ideas. Plan and structure the answer. The plan will display pattern of the essay as a whole, and where different points are linked. It is easy to see the balance and sequence of the essay. Include references and points to be made. Templates which show how to structure an answer help with planning. Examples are available with Inspiration Software. See [www.dyslexiacourses.ie](http://www.dyslexiacourses.ie) under downloads for English Paper 1 Tips.
4. **Write.** Now that thinking has been done, the task is to write. The comprehensive plan keeps your writing to the point. Use signposts for the reader to understand the structure such as words like '**however**', '**finally**'. Don't stop for spelling at this stage. Get your ideas down.
5. **Check.** Proofread three times, once for spelling, once for punctuation and paragraphing, and once to check the content is to the point and well structured.

Here are some ideas which might help with writing.

- Make up one key character and two other people in his/her life. Imagine it in great detail such as how they look, clothes, hobbies, family, school, jobs, good and bad habits, friends, opinions etc. Even collect photos of what they might look like. It makes it easier to compose a short story if you have the characters already in your head.
- Use your five senses when writing a description of a scene.

- When answering questions think of 3 points to support your answer, then 2 references /quotes to back up each point.
- Use the question to start your answer. So if you are asked *What the key causes of climate change?* begin your answer *The key causes of climate change are...*
- Have checklists of points to prompt you to write more. For example when writing about a person in history, think about clothes, food, farming, houses, rulers, religion, schools, beliefs, death.

## Revision

- Students with dyslexia do not cram for exams well. A good revision programme avoids the feeling of being overwhelmed.
- The first step in preparation is to know what is coming up in the exam. Ask teachers for the topics which are to be examined. Check you have the necessary sets of notes, text books and revision books. Make out a master sheet of what has to be done in each subject. Mark off topics as you revise and you see the progress you are making.
- Make out a revision timetable showing each day of the week and the time allocated to study. Then allocate subjects to these times. Ensure that you have time for all your subjects over the week.
- Get up early the morning of an exam and revise from 6.00 am to 8.00 am. It means the information is fresh in your mind.
- Revision is an active process and involves hard work. The multi-sensory methods of seeing, hearing, listening and writing all help the retention of material learnt.
- Be familiar with past examination papers and how questions are framed. Practise answering questions. When examiners correct papers, they have a marking scheme which shows them what to look for and award marks on the paper. These schemes are available for students to look at on website [www.examinations.ie](http://www.examinations.ie) under Examination Material Archive.

## Key dates for students

### Third Year

- Applications for reasonable accommodations (RACE) in Junior Certificate examination are made in October/November.
- If you have been granted RACE for the Junior Certificate, check that the school will provide the same accommodation in the Mocks.

### Third Year or Transition Year

- Apply to NUI (National University of Ireland) for 3<sup>rd</sup> language exemption if appropriate. If you are exempt from the study of Irish on the grounds of dyslexia, the 3<sup>rd</sup> language exemption will be granted. If you are not exempt from Irish, the criteria for the 3<sup>rd</sup> language exemption are that scores in the assessment report should be at or below the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile (standard score 81) in two literacy areas.

### Fifth Year

- If applying for RACE, keep the scripts of Christmas house exams for the application. In particular, keep the English scripts.
- The applications for RACE for the Leaving Certificate are submitted in May/September prior to the exam.

### Sixth Year

- If you are interested in applying for DARE, you should make a CAO application by 1<sup>st</sup> Feb.
- You should disclose your disability or learning difficulty by filling in Section A of the Supplementary Information Form (SIF) by March 1<sup>st</sup>. If you wish to be considered for the DARE scheme, you must tick the Yes box on Question 1. Then Complete Section A.
- It is your responsibility to return completed, signed and stamped the Educational Impact Statement filled out by the school (Section B) and evidence of disability (Section C) by April 1<sup>st</sup>. Put your name and CAO number on everything you send in.
- It is your responsibility to ensure that the CAO are aware if you have language exemptions.

## Useful websites for students on study skills, revision notes and exam preparation.

### General sites

[www.rte.ie/exams](http://www.rte.ie/exams)

This site includes advice and analysis of exam papers across many subjects. It has podcasts giving advice in the final run-up to the exams in June. It has revision notes in some subjects.

[www.sparknotes.com](http://www.sparknotes.com)

Provides

- A range of literature study guides including a wide range of Shakespearian plays and many novels.
- A number of animated video guides to some of the plays (Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, Romeo and Juliet, etc.) and some novels (To Kill a Mockingbird, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, 1984 etc.).
- There are also No Fear Guides for some of the plays (Merchant of Venice, King Lear, Macbeth, Hamlet, etc.) and some novels. These provide the original text on one half of the page, with modern English language version on the other half of the page.
- There are study notes on subjects such as Biology, Chemistry, Economics, Physics, History and Maths. It includes a section on poetry with specific poets such as Dickinson, Donne, Eliot, Frost, and Yeats.

[www.studentenrichment.ie](http://www.studentenrichment.ie)

Study tips, templates for goals setting and timetables, links to revision sites.

[www.studynotes.ie](http://www.studynotes.ie)

Includes revision notes, flashcards for key vocabulary, lists of key quotations, videos for JC and LC in a wide range of subjects. There are short animated video summaries based on Spark notes of Hamlet, Macbeth and Romeo and Juliet. Poems in the Irish syllabus are read aloud.

[www.s-cool.co.uk](http://www.s-cool.co.uk)

Website for the UK GCSE and A levels, with free revision guides and study tips in subject such as Biology, Chemistry, Physics, French, Maths, Economics etc.

[www.studyclix.ie](http://www.studyclix.ie)

This site provides an analysis of past papers in the LC and JC by topic as well as the marking schemes. It also has notes and videos on different topics. However basic access to 2 questions and 2 marking schemes is free. Otherwise it is €25 for access to the resources for all subjects for one year.

[www.vark-learn.com](http://www.vark-learn.com)

VARX is an on-line questionnaire that provides users with a profile of their learning preferences.

## Subject specific websites

### Art History

[www.pdst.ie/node/4141](http://www.pdst.ie/node/4141) . This link has powerpoint presentations on different topics from the History of Art course for LC.

### Engineering

[www.rte.ie/exams](http://www.rte.ie/exams)

This website has a link to Engineering notes and powerpoints.

### English

[www.sccenglish.ie](http://www.sccenglish.ie)

Website for St. Columba's English Department. It covers poetry, drama, essays and includes podcasts on key texts for the LC such as Hamlet, King Lear and MacBeth. An example is Podcast 21 which is the third in a series of 6 podcasts on King Lear which are about 10 minutes each. This Podcast features 10 quotations and examines the quotations as key moments in the play, linking them to the rest of the text and prompting fresh reflection on the themes and characters. Podcast 24 is about patterns in poetry.

### Geography

[www.lcgeography.preswex.ie](http://www.lcgeography.preswex.ie)

Website designed for the Geography students in Presentation School Wexford, but has grown to help all students studying Geography at LC level. (If the above link does not open, search for Leaving Certificate Geography Presentation Wexford).

### **History**

[www.leavingcerthistory.net](http://www.leavingcerthistory.net)

Website for the Leaving Certificate History class in St. Patricks Comprehensive School, Shannon.

### **Irish**

[www.Irishstudysite.com](http://www.Irishstudysite.com)

Resources on the study of Irish with sections on prose, poetry, essays, the oral Irish etc.

### **Languages**

[www.duolingo.com](http://www.duolingo.com)

This site provides interactive learning of languages in progressive stages with writing and speaking exercises. Languages include Irish, French, Spanish, German and Italian.

[www.rte.ie/exams](http://www.rte.ie/exams)

This website has links to French and German newspapers and radio stations.

### **Maths**

[www.alison.com](http://www.alison.com)

Free on-line course in Project Maths with video tutorials of lessons at JC and LC levels in both ordinary and higher levels. The site also covers topics in Physics and Chemistry.

### **Science**

[www.thephysicsteacher.ie](http://www.thephysicsteacher.ie) Study notes in JC Science, LC Physics and Applied Maths with some material on Biology.

[www.juniorcertscience.com](http://www.juniorcertscience.com)

Notes and resources for Junior Certificate Science

[www.frogblog.ie](http://www.frogblog.ie)

Frogblog contains short and snappy articles on topics in Science, Environment, Engineering, from Astronomy to zoology. It is for science enthusiasts of all ages. From 2013 it is no longer being updated, but the archive remains active.