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# Dyspraxia

**Dyspraxia, otherwise known as Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD), is a common disorder affecting fine and/or gross motor coordination in children and adults.**

It may also affect speech, perception, language and thought. Like all other SpLDs, it is a lifelong condition and is on a continuum from mild to severe.

Dyspraxia is distinct from other motor disorders such as cerebral palsy and stroke, and occurs across the range of intellectual abilities.

Furthermore individuals may vary in how their difficulties present and these may change over time depending on environmental demands and life experiences.

## Typical strengths *may* include:

- △ Ability to develop their own strategies to overcome difficulties
- △ Creativity and originality
- △ Good strategic thinkers and problem-solvers
- △ Determined and hard-working



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## Typical difficulties *may* include:

- △ Fine motor skills: manual dexterity may be weak so tasks such as writing, tying shoe laces, buttons, zips and using cutlery and eating may be troublesome and messy
- △ Gross motor skills: where the term 'clumsy child' can come from. Skills such as riding a bike, catching and throwing. General spatial awareness / disorientation and bumping into things
- △ Organisation skills: including following instructions in sequence, following rules, poor sense of time
- △ Visual / spatial skills: challenges may be with aspects of maths, drawing graphs, copying from the board
- △ Social interaction: social skills may be immature and a child may misjudge body language and facial expressions and have a tendency to 'overdo' things causing others to be irritated and themselves to feel distressed and emotional\*

(\*adapted from The Parent's Guide to Specific Learning Difficulties, Veronica Bidwell)

Many people with dyspraxia also experience difficulties with memory, articulation of speech, perception and processing.

Occupational Therapists and Physiotherapists have the expertise to design a physical programme for improving strength, coordination and stamina. They will also be able to suggest certain classroom modifications to support the dyspraxic learners.

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## Tips for supporting Dyspraxic learners:

### **Be organised**

Have a practical approach to helping students with organisation skills. Make sure a student's study space is clear of clutter and help them to organise their worksheets into folders with dividers.



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Students may need additional support with strategies for remembering kit or equipment for school, so making lists, using graphic organisers and creating posters with things to remember can all be useful.

### **Computer skills**

Where possible encourage use of a computer and particularly touch-typing skills.

Copying and writing can be particularly difficult so for the purpose of note-taking in lessons, acting as scribe or providing typed notes where possible can be useful.

### **Study skills**

Use scaffolding techniques such as [graphic organisers](#) for planning and reviewing work.

Help with structuring written work by providing templates.

### **Maintain focus**

Divide work into manageable chunks and allow for short breaks to aid focus and attention.

Encourage students to stand up and move around for a couple of moments during a break and encourage them to drink water.

### **Be encouraging and patient in your approach**

Often students can find themselves lacking confidence and self-esteem due to focusing on all the things that they feel they don't do as well as other people. Confidence can be built through a mastery of skills, a sense of achievement and patient support.

Allow students freedom of choice and autonomy where possible and encourage them to take ownership of a task.

Give comments in a feedback sandwich (+ / - / +).



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*Working with Dyspraxic students requires just that. Working with a student to find learning mechanisms and processes that work for that individual. Using colour to organise a topic works for some students, monochrome diagrams and auditory reinforcement work better for others.*

*Finally being patient and emphasising all improvements large or small is important, as is making sure the lesson ends with a smile (or at the very least not a frown!)*

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**Gurs, maths and science tutor**

## Useful websites:

Through our website you are able to link to other websites which are not under the control of Osborne Cawkwell Tuition. We have no control over the nature, content and availability of those sites. The inclusion of any links does not necessarily imply a recommendation or endorse the views expressed within them.

[Dyspraxia Foundation](#)  
[Understood](#)  
[Dys Talk](#)  
[Dyspraxia UK](#)

## Further reading for parents:

- △ *The Parents' Guide to Specific Learning Difficulties: Information, Advice and Practical Tips*, by Veronica Bidwell
- △ *How to Understand and Support Children with Dyspraxia*, by Lois Addy
- △ *100 Ideas for Supporting Pupils with Dyspraxia and DCD*, by Amanda Kirby

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## Further reading for Dyspraxic students:

- △ *You're So Clumsy Charley: Having Dyspraxia, Dyslexia, ADHD, Asperger's or Autism Does Not Make You Stupid*, by Jane Binnion
- △ *Emily's Sister: A Family's Journey With Dyspraxia and Sensory Processing Disorder*, by Michele Gianetti