

Dyslexia Help – Strategies for Teachers

<http://dyslexiahelp.umich.edu/professionals/dyslexia-school/strategies-for-teachers>

Some general recommendations for teachers of beginning readers and writers

1. Make personalized books and stories with the student's name and photos. Alternatively, have him or her dictate a story and draw pictures, which an adult can then transcribe and bind with a cover.
2. Increase print awareness by asking your student to look for everything he/she can find with writing (i.e. McDonald's sign, labels, and packages).
3. Provide multisensory experiences for students related to each book that they read, such as using stories and coloring pages (available with a story teller guide).
4. Choose rhyming books with high repetition of words and phrases.
5. Dramatically pause to allow students to fill in the refrain as you are reading.
6. Play sound matching games. For example, say, "Let's think of as many things as we can that start with Mmmm." Your student might say "Mouse, moo, milk." If your student has difficulty, give him or her clues. Say: "We drink mmmmm." Wait two seconds and then provide the answer ("milk").
7. Increase the repertoire of shapes your student draws to include circles, triangles, squares, and various facial features, such as eyes and a mouth.
8. Increase the repertoire of letters your student writes to include all the letters in the alphabet and numbers up to 10.
9. Guide your student's drawing and writing by placing your hand on top of his or her hand. Gradually fade the level of assistance.

General recommendations

1. During times when other students are independently working on class work, the student should have the option to work in a study carrel with headphones to eliminate distractions.
2. Allow extra time to complete tests.
3. Provide a regular study buddy whom the student sits next to in class.
4. Give "THINK TIME" before answering a question. This can be done by presenting a question and then pausing or by coming back to the student after a little while and repeating the question. Alternatively, have multiple students answer the same question. In this way, several models are provided.
5. Provide opportunities for writing and spelling every day, in a variety of formats, such as writing in a journal, sending an email, writing or copying a list of homework activities, writing on a large wall calendar, writing thank you letters, or archiving items in a collection.

6. Explicitly teach organization and planning skills for completing and tracking homework. Instruct students how to break down large projects into smaller tasks.
7. Improve word retrieval for naming through participation in one or more of these games: Scattagories, Taboo, Guesstures, Password, Scrabble, logic puzzles, rebus puzzles, Catch-Phrase, UpWords, Tribond, Plexers, crosswords and other word puzzles.
8. Give manipulatives (things to touch and move around) whenever possible to work on math related to time, money, or fractions.
9. Explicitly and systematically teach math to students with dyslexia (including models of proficient problem solving, verbalization of thought processes, guided practice, corrective feedback, and frequent cumulative review). *Dyslexia and Mathematics* Second Edition edited by T. R. Miles and Elaine Miles, 1992, and The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) *Guide for Assisting Students Struggling with Mathematics: Response to Intervention (RtI)* for Elementary and Middle Schools provide more information.

Recommendations to support reading comprehension and fluency for classroom materials

Before reading

1. Preview the title, pictures, chapter names, and bold-faced words in order to make a prediction.
2. Connect new information to previously learned information by talking about a personal experience related to the theme.
3. Verbalize or write questions prior to reading the text.
4. Discuss reading schemas for different types of textbooks (i.e. compare math and history). Highlight salient information that each genre addresses. Visual webs are useful for the student to preview and complete as they encounter key information.
5. Pre-teach key vocabulary for a particular unit or chapter before introducing the text.
6. Pre-teach themes or background information (i.e. historical context) for reading fiction.
7. Explicitly teach “how to use” the table of contents, glossary, index, headings, sidebars, charts, captions, and review questions in a text book.

During reading

1. Provide a set of textbooks for the student to take home and to highlight.
2. Assign class readings a week ahead of time for students to preview. This will improve attention and comprehension.
3. Provide audio recordings for the student to use while reading the text.
 - Books on tape and audio equipment may be obtained, free of charge, through the National Library Service.
 - A large range of books are already scanned and available for free through Bookshare.

4. Give the student a choice of what to read within selected genres, topics, and themes. High interest reading facilitates comprehension and reading for pleasure. In addition to classroom learning, the “curriculum” should cultivate the students’ interests and strengths (both in and outside of the classroom). The Time on My Hands and Affinities checklists at [All Kinds of Minds](#) may be helpful in guiding the student to high-interest reading materials.
5. Make texts at a variety of reading levels available so that students can read fluently but also be slightly challenged (the appropriate instructional level).
6. Allow the student to use text-to-speech software for information on the computer.
 - This may be established by setting preferences on a Macintosh computer.
 - Text-to-speech software is available through a free trial over at [CNET](#).
 - A scanner with OCR (optical character recognition) may be used to scan textbooks onto the computer.
7. Model self-monitoring skills with the following questions: “Does what I’m reading make sense?” “What do I think will happen next?” “Are there any words that I don’t know?” “Can I figure out what the words mean from the sentences around them?”
8. Encourage sub-vocalization of the text and self-monitoring questions.
9. Model active engagement with the text through visualization of the scene (i.e. trying to make a “photograph” of the word in his/her mind’s eye while enhancing visual features), highlighting, note taking, or jotting down a question.
10. Train students to silently read at various rates depending on the purpose; for example, skimming to find a particular term or to get the main idea or gist vs. reading more carefully for directions or comprehension of key concept.
11. Encourage multiple readings of a text.
12. Provide templates for students to jot down notes and key concepts as they read (i.e. a story line, visual web, or list of WH-questions).
 - If a student is reading a chapter book or novel, one template should be completed for each scene or chapter.
 - Pre-made templates are available for free at [Inspiration Software](#). These can be customized as well. Many teachers have made their Inspiration units/lessons available on the web.
13. Bolster comprehension of idioms and more abstract language through reading the scripts of everyday conversations on [Randall’s Listening Lab](#). Students can listen to the conversation as they read. Key vocabulary is highlighted and defined.

Supporting vocabulary while reading

1. Log unfamiliar words in a personal dictionary that includes the sentence that contains the word, page number, a guess about the meaning, the pronunciation, a dictionary definition, and a new sentence using the word.

2. Improve vocabulary for written and verbal expression by forming associations between words, paraphrasing, and elaborating on an idea.
3. Teach prefixes, suffixes, and root words to students to improve spelling, decoding, and comprehension.
4. Give ample opportunities to practice writing target words. The student might be asked to say them or use them in sentences or a story.
5. Look up unfamiliar words with an electronic speller that has speech output (such as the Franklin Speller) or a web-based dictionary. For example, [Dictionary.com](https://www.dictionary.com) provides the pronunciation and definition of a word.

After reading

1. Verbalize or write the answers to the pre-reading questions and share the answers with a friend or family member.
2. Compose an alternative ending for the story or write a sequel.
3. Act out key scenes from a text or give “How To” demonstrations for kinesthetic learners.
4. Challenge students to draw inferences from the text (i.e. "How do you think the main character feels?" "Do you think it will be harder to stop a heavier or lighter object traveling at the same velocity?").

Oral reading

1. Increase reading fluency through a “reading apprenticeship” incorporating the following elements:
 - Models of fluent reading.
 - Repetition of the same passage, until reading is fluent.
 - Dramatic readings (i.e. skits, poetry, and speeches).
 - Regular tracking and graphing of reading rate and fluency.
2. See [Read Naturally](#) for a systematic program that incorporates choral reading (reading at the same time as a fluent reader), repetitions, and tracking of reading fluency.
3. For more information on reading apprenticeships, see *The Fluent Reader: Oral Reading Strategies for Building Word Recognition, Fluency, and Comprehension*, by Timothy Rasinski.

Supporting comprehension of written directions

1. Present less written material per page with no more than two directions in a sentence. Double spacing and bullets or numbers are also helpful.
2. Provide additional time to take tests.
3. Assist the student in breaking apart the written directions into smaller steps.
4. Check for comprehension of the directions.

5. Both auditory and written instructions should be provided.
6. Sub-rehearse (quietly or silently repeating) the directions to keep them in working memory long enough to complete them.

Recommendations to support writing in school

1. Increase phonetic spelling of unfamiliar words by counting the number of sounds in a word, and then correlating the sounds with letters.
2. Explicitly teach phonics rules and review them multiple times.
3. Provide a disproportionate amount of positive feedback for writing (relative to correction). Students should be praised for words that are spelled phonetically and accurately.
4. Use [Kidspiration](#), [Inspiration](#) or other webbing strategies for planning.
5. Institute delays that require the student to wait 5 minutes before starting a writing task. The student should be instructed to spend those 5 minutes planning.
6. Explicitly teach the elements of writing narratives or essays.
7. Brainstorm key vocabulary prior to writing.
8. Provide a focused spelling program such as [Spellography](#) to work on learning specific morphological, semantic and mental orthographic spelling rules.
9. Group words into word families with multiple exemplars of each phonetic pattern.
10. Provide models of “good essays” for struggling writers to use as a template.
11. Dictate stories with an audio recording or dictation software.
12. Emphasize the need to write in “stages” rather than completing a long narrative in one sitting. The stages should include: planning, writing, and revision.
13. Teach mnemonic devices for editing such as: SCOPE (spelling, organization, order of words, punctuation, and expresses a complete thought)
14. Instruct students to create an alternate ending for a familiar story, make a modern-day story historic, or create a comic strip of two of the characters having a conversation.
15. Use word prediction software such as [Co:Writer](#) for improving spelling and complex sentence structure.
16. Text-to-speech [software](#) and word processing should be available for editing written work.
17. Encourage students to keep a journal. To increase motivation, visual images should be added to each page (i.e. “things found” throughout the day: maps, photos, or clippings from a magazine or the internet).
18. Improve penmanship with a larger pen or pencil grip and raised-line paper.

19. Practice handwriting using the following low-tech strategies: [pencil grips, paper with raised lines](#) and a slant board.

Recommendations for students with visual deficits

1. Encourage students to use a line guide as he/she is reading, to avoid skipping lines.
2. Use cut-out window for completing math worksheets.
3. Give visual pictures for commonly reversed or flipped letters: (i.e. "Which way does the "b"/ "d" go in "bed?").
4. Utilize a highlighter for key words, concepts, and/or directions when presented with written material.
5. Give visual images to associate with problematic sounds such as "short a" and "e" (i.e. Does the "e" in "bed" sound like a "short e" in "elephant" or a "long e" in "eagle?" "Does the "a" in "angel" sound like the "short a" in "alligator" or the "long a" in "ape?").
6. Encourage students to keep a copy of a "letter shaping card" in his/her school supplies and homework supplies for an easy reference.