

Dysgraphia

What is dysgraphia?

Dysgraphia is a neurological condition affecting a combination of motor and information-processing skills used in writing.

People with the condition have difficulty with both the physical aspect of writing and the thought processes associated with expressing things in writing. Many people with dysgraphia are able to write, but the exercise requires a lot of concentration and effort, and the results may be hard to read.

Dysgraphia is likely to co-occur with other neurodiverse conditions, particularly dyslexia, dyscalculia and dyspraxia.



Skills and strengths

Strengths associated with the different way people with dysgraphia think include:

- Strong long-term memory skills and a highly developed ability to memorise facts
- Instinctive understanding of very complex subjects and concepts
- Innovative, intuitive and original thinking
- Creativity and artistic flair.

Potential challenges and difficulties

The main difficulties people with dysgraphia experience include:

- Untidy handwriting – they may write using a mixture of upper and lower case letters, there may be irregularities in the size and shape of their letters and they may not finish their letters properly, making any written material they produce very difficult to read
- Poor and inconsistent spelling and grammar
- Being unable to write in straight lines
- Being unable to express thoughts and ideas clearly in writing
- Difficulty structuring written work
- Losing track of thoughts in the middle of written work
- Inability to write at speed or seeming to need extra effort to write
- Getting easily tired when writing
- Awkward or cramped pen grip
- Complaining of pain while writing
- Needing to complete multiple drafts
- Avoiding handwriting wherever possible
- Experiencing little effect from additional support with handwriting
- Frustration with their own writing ability
- Difficulty with organisation
- Struggling with complex instructions.

All of these difficulties may get significantly worse when they are under pressure.



Helpful tips for supporting someone with dysgraphia at work

Whether you have an employee, colleague or customer with dysgraphia, there are some simple things you can do to make their life easier and support them with some of the key areas they may struggle with.

General writing tasks

- Avoid allocating specific tasks that involve writing, especially in group settings
- Provide a tablet or computer they can use to type rather than write
- Use technology, such as a voice recorder or speech-to-text software, to help them record information
- Consider allowing them to provide reports in a presentation or in video format, rather than in written format
- Provide pen or pencil grips to help them with taking written notes
- Supply a dictionary, spell checker or glossary
- Use lined paper
- Offer additional support to help them develop the mechanics of handwriting if this is something they would like to do.

Written reports

- Extend deadlines for the completion of written work
- Schedule extra time in the week for written work
- Suggest breaking writing tasks into stages, for example:
 - » brainstorming
 - » drafting
 - » editing
 - » proofreading
 - » final draft
- Break down and set interim deadlines for assignments or lengthy reports
- Provide examples and templates
- Offer assistance with any hand-written work, including proofreading.



Training, meetings and assessments

- Reduce the amount of copying needed, for example, by providing workbooks with gaps for answers
- Provide handouts in advance of training sessions, leaving gaps for notes
- Provide briefing papers for meetings in advance
- Suggest photocopying a colleague's notes from meetings or training sessions
- Consider whether you need to provide a scribe to assist them during tests or written assessments.

Remember, the individual is the expert in their condition – if in doubt, check with them!