

Dysgraphia

Information for parents and carers



What is dysgraphia?

Dysgraphia is believed to affect up to 10% of school age children, according to the Learning Difficulties Network, based in Scotland. This includes children with writing difficulties that may co-occur with dyslexia or dyscalculia. Dysgraphia is a learning 'difference', which means that the brain can approach things in a different way to other people, it is something you are born with and that you live with.

Dysgraphia affects the ability to recognise written words, linking the shapes of letters and their sounds and laying out work neatly on the page. It is different for everyone. There is much less dysgraphia research than research on dyslexia and currently no Scottish Working Definition. Dysgraphia is classed as a disability under the Equality Act. (Compiled from information on Dyslexia Scotland and Hft)

Definition used by Fife 2025:

Dysgraphia is deficiency in the ability to write, primarily in terms of handwriting, but also in terms of coherence. Dysgraphia is a transcription disability, meaning that it is a writing disorder associated with impaired handwriting, orthographic coding (the storing process of written words and processing the letters in those words), and finger sequencing (the movement of muscles required to write). It often overlaps with other learning disabilities, such as speech impairment, attention deficit disorder (ADD), or developmental coordination disorder (DCD/Dyspraxia).

Helpful resources

- **CALL Scotland**
www.callscotland.org.uk/information/dyslexia/writing/
- **Education Scotland** - Additional Support Information for parents
education.gov.scot/parentzone/additional-support
- **BBC Bitesize** – Learning Activities
www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/parents
- **YouTube Dough Disco** – fine motor activities
www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLtw-7Jf06an0-84tDAgicwFYUqBD9Qfkm
- **Hft Learning Disability Allies** - Dysgraphia
www.hft.org.uk/resources-and-guidance/what-is-a-learning-disability/learning-difficulties-and-other-needs/dysgraphia/

For more information speak to your school or visit www.fife.gov.uk/pupilsupport

Strengths associated with dysgraphia

- Creativity and design
- Problem-solving, approaching problems in new ways
- Strong oral communication
- Big-picture thinking, they can see the broader picture rather than getting caught up in smaller details
- Connecting ideas, the ability to make new connections between ideas
- Leadership skills
- Resilience and determination
- They can be 'people people' (show kindness, empathy and interest in others)

Difficulties associated with dysgraphia

- Difficulty with fine motor skills (e.g. awkward position or pain when writing, trouble with using scissors, tying shoelaces, fastening buttons or picking up small objects)
- May struggle to lay out their work neatly on the page, with things like spacing or and alignment sometimes looking uneven or jumbled, unfinished words or letters
- Messy handwriting that is hard to read, may switch between different writing styles such as joined up and block, random use of upper/lower case letters
- Difficulty with spelling rules, punctuation and copying words
- They can't get their ideas down on paper the way they tell them, and they may struggle to finish written work
- Difficulty organising their thoughts
- Negative feelings towards writing, reluctance or refusal to complete writing tasks, slow laboured writing, embarrassed by writing ability or poor handwriting
- Homework a struggle to complete
- It is important to remember that everyone with dysgraphia is different, everyone has different strengths, difficulties and strategies that work for them.

It's important to remember, everyone has different strengths, difficulties and strategies that work for them.

Support strategies for children

Everyone is an individual and so what supports one person may not support another. Sometimes asking the person with dysgraphia to suggest solutions to problems can produce simple but effective results.

Key supports

These supports may be offered in school and if you wish to provide them, your child may find them useful at home.

- Try using different sizes or styles of pencils/pens, pencil grips, a sloped board to write on
- Activities to strengthening the arms and hands (i.e. hopscotch, ball games, playing with balloons or bubbles, trampolining, obstacle courses)
- Activities to help build small hand movements (i.e. threading beads, practising pencil control through drawing and tracing, play dough (dough disco on YouTube))
- Use of mind-mapping, flow charts or visuals to present and plan learning
- Assistive Technology for written work, text to speech software
- Recording voice notes before beginning a writing task to help organisation
- Early identification and provision of appropriate support as soon as possible

Tips for parents

- Support your child to organise their resources for school, having stationery they enjoy using can make writing tasks feel less stressful and more inviting
- Even if your child is great at speaking and explaining things out loud, it's important to remember that writing those ideas down can still be really hard for them—and that's okay
- Homework shouldn't be a big struggle – support your child / agree an amount of time for the task and speak to the school if completing the homework is still problematic
- Using technology and / getting or help enhances learning and is not 'cheating'
- Your child may find school exhausting, allowing them time to unwind is beneficial to their wellbeing
- Experiencing different activities, sports and hobbies will help to develop motor skills, and so help with handwriting
- Embrace opportunities for learning in real life context i.e. writing lists to go to the shops.