

# Study Skills and Dyslexia



## Learning Objectives

- \* Understand how you can improve study techniques
- \* Understand how to use ICT to help your learning
- \* Develop skills in time management
- \* Develop skills in memory

St Columba's High School  
Support for Learning Department

# Introduction

**Study Skills to help students with dyslexia and literacy difficulties.**

You must prepare well to do well in school and in your exams.

This booklet aims to give you some ideas that might help you to improve how you study and revise.

## Targets

It is important to think about why you are working so hard. This will help you to motivate yourself to do the extra work required to succeed.

Think about the reasons that motivate you:

- Getting a job
- Getting qualifications
- Feeling more self confident
- Going on to study more
- Earning a reward

Some people  
dream of success,  
while others wake up  
& work hard at it.

- Winston Churchill

You don't need to have your entire career planned out in front of you to succeed but you must have some sort of focus.

When athletes train for a sport, the aim is to make the training hard so that the match or race seems easy in comparison, the same applies with revision—do it properly and the exams will be much easier.

**Success starts with you.**

**Take responsibility for your own achievement.**

**Believe in yourself!**

# Get Organised

## Study Skills to help students with dyslexia and literacy difficulties.

Prioritise your subjects

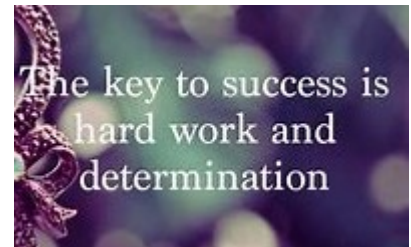
Think about the order they come in.

Think about which subjects might need more work than others.

Look after yourself. Take time for relaxation, watch a movie, go for a walk.

How and when you do revision is really important. Think about the environment you like best from the list below:

- Silence, background music, headphones on with music
- Bright light, medium light, low light
- At your desk, at a table, somewhere else
- Time of day (morning, afternoon, evening)



Think about what might distract you and how you can prevent this from happening. It is important to remain focussed on revision for a length of time. Revise for whatever is the best length of time for you. This may be as little as 20 minute blocks or as long as 45 minutes to an hour blocks. At the end of your period of time, do something different for 5—10 minutes. Move around, get a snack or a drink. Go back and study some more.

It is vital that you are positive in your mind about revision. You can train your brain to be more positive:

- Think of overall goals and how to achieve them
- Set achievable goals for each day and reward yourself.
- Revise in a way that suits you

# Time Management

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It can be hard to get motivated and organised to study but it can make a huge difference if you set aside time to study well in advance of your exams and make up a realistic study timetable that will work for you.

1. Make up a revision time table. Plan so that it is achievable and realistic and then stick to it!
2. Try to do a bit of work every night, even if you don't have homework you can always revise.
3. Allocate set times for each subject.
4. Organise your subject work into folders. Coloured folders for each subject might be useful. Keep everything together so you can find it easily. Colours can also be used to colour code notes or in mind maps.
5. Remember to plan times to relax, take part in activities that you enjoy and spend time with friends and family.

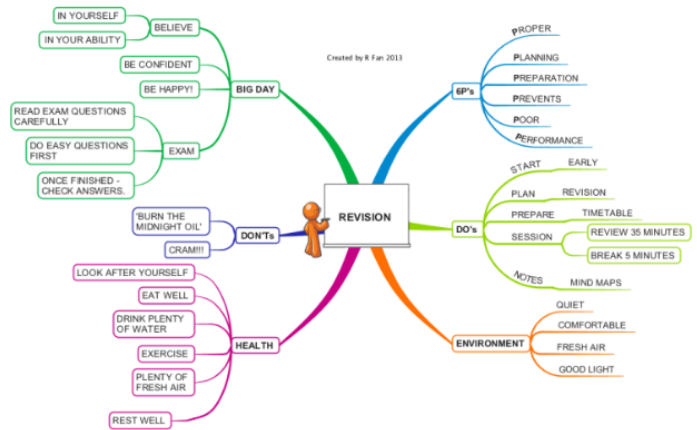
Here is a sample revision timetable for throughout the year. You might want to add more in the run up to any exams.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
4-5pm	Maths			English	History		French
6-7pm		Football training	History	Football training		French	Biology
7-8pm	English	Biology	Music	Maths			

# Mind Maps

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Mind maps can be a really useful visual way to revise. Rather than writing out paragraphs of information, arrange your notes into sections coming out from a central theme. An example mind map is shown below.



Mind maps can be handwritten or can be made using computer mind mapping programmes. .

To make a mind map:

- Start with a blank sheet of paper (rotated sideways)
- Write your main theme in the centre of your page. You can add pictures if you like.
- Use lines as "branches" to link to subtopics. Use colours for each subtopic.
- Add extra lines as you think of more ideas.

## X-Mind

This is a free mind map tool that can be downloaded from CALL Scotland as part of MyStudyBar. The download link and a video tutorial on how to use it is shown below.

Using X-Mind Mind Map software

<https://youtu.be/PTIFF8bzWsk>

MyStudyBar download link

<http://www.callscotland.org.uk/mystudybar/>



# Memory and Study Tips

## Study Skills to help students with dyslexia and literacy difficulties.

The following is advice from Dyslexia Scotland which gives some useful ideas for studying.

### 1. What do you already know?

- Write this down.
- Check what other information you need to learn. Cornell note taking might help. More detail is given on this on the next page.
- Use colour to highlight facts
- You could use colour to match the topics.

### 2. Make revision resources

- Use cue cards with bullet point notes.
- Write only key words or phrases.
- Use colours to distinguish the different points.
- Use symbols, images, numbers, diagrams, tables and charts to cut down words.
- Use more bullet points for topics you are less familiar with.

### 3. Memory Techniques

There are ways to train your mind to improve how you can memorise lists and facts. The links below take you to some good websites with ideas to try to improve your memorising skills.



<https://www.beatingdyslexia.com/memory-improvement-techniques.html>

BBC Brainsmart



<https://bit.ly/2AqPdZ5>

# Taking Notes

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## Cornell Notes

This is a simple method to help you remember what you have been learning.

At home, spend a few minutes making summarised notes of what you learned in the subject that day. Putting things into your own words and summarising will help you remember better.

### Keywords & Questions

- What was the topic of the lesson?
- What were the key themes?
- Do you have any questions about what you learned?
- What questions might you be asked in a test or an essay.
- This will help you process the information.
- It will also make a handy study tool for revising.

### Note taking section

Use this section to note the important parts of the lesson.

Avoid long sentences so you can make better use of the space.

Use outlines, notes, mindmaps or whatever suits you best.

**Summary**—Fill in this section within a day of your class while the information is fresh in your mind. Revise notes and questions and write a short summary of the information on the page.

This helps you process the information by making you use it in a new way.



## Using Digital Papers

Study Skills to help students with dyslexia and literacy difficulties.

Using digital exam papers is an option that many students with dyslexia find useful. Instead of writing your exam responses, you can access the question paper on a PC and type your answers directly onto the answer booklet, often with the spell check facility available,

This can be really helpful as it allows you to easily make changes. If you are using a digital reader, it also allows the computer to read your answers back to you.

You should practice using a digital paper before the exam, if you think that this is something you might like to try, speak to the SfL staff to arrange to practice with a past exam paper. You should also talk to your class teacher as digital papers may not be ideal for every subject (eg maths).

However, if your typing is not very fast, it might be worthwhile to spend some time working on typing speed . A link is given below to an online typing practice website. You can also use the typing app on My Study Bar.

Typing speed practice



<https://www.typing.com/>



# My Study Bar

## Study Skills to help students with dyslexia and literacy difficulties.

My Study Bar is a floating toolbar package that combines a lot of resources that can help you to study .

It has 10 apps including mind mapping, coloured overlays, screen reader and others.

1. Planning : Xmind – mind mapping.
2. Reading :
  - Bar – to customise background colours.
  - Vu-Bar – an onscreen ruler to read single lines of text.
  - ssOverlay – coloured overlays.
  - ATBar – select text to hear it read aloud
3. Writing:
  - Balabolka – a talking word processor
  - LetMeType – flexible word prediction
  - Rapid Typing – learn to touch type.
4. Voice: Windows Speech Recognition - speak to your computer.
5. Vision: System Font Size Changer ,customise font, colour settings in Windows.

My Study bar can be downloaded for free from Call Scotland. It can run on a computer or from a USB drive.

The link is given below. If you think that it might be useful for you, you can try out some of the apps by downloading from the link below.



MyStudyBar download link

<http://www.callscotland.org.uk/mystudybar/>

# Text to speech readers

Study Skills to help students with dyslexia and literacy difficulties.

An electronic reader can be used to read text from a computer and to read back your answers if you have chosen to type them.

This can be really useful but it's important to practice using the system to get confident with it before exams.

The reader that is used in school is Ivona mini reader.

Using Ivona text to speech reader:

- Click the Ivona icon to open the program. A floating toolbar will appear on the screen that can be moved around to a position that suits you.
  - First make sure that you choose a high quality voice.  
Cerevoice Stuart and Cerevoice Heather are Scottish accent voices that can be downloaded from Call Scotland.
  - Highlight the text that you want read out loud.
  - Click the play button.
  - The speed of reading can be adjusted if necessary.
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Information about downloading text to speech programs.

<http://www.callscotland.org.uk/Information/text-to-speech/>



## Other ICT Tips

### Study Skills to help students with dyslexia and literacy difficulties.

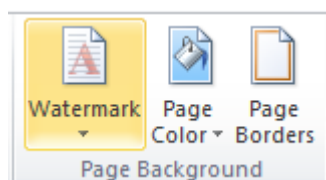
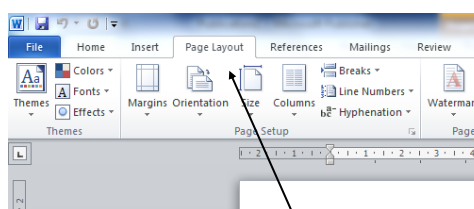
ICT can be a very useful support for people with dyslexia. However, some people with dyslexia, Irlen Syndrome or visual stress can find black text on a white background difficult to read. In school, coloured overlays or jotters may be used to help overcome these problems. There are also ways in which similar effects can be achieved when working on a computer.

#### Microsoft Word

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In Word, it is very simple to change page background colours.

In the menu bar at the top of the page, click on the page layout tab.



Click on the icon "Page colour" and choose the colour that you would prefer. Pale pastel shades are usually the most appropriate.

In Word, it may also be useful to choose a dyslexia friendly font. These are generally sans serif fonts. Good choices include Century Gothic, Tahoma, Myriad Web Pro, Calibri, Geneva, Comic Sans. Specially designed dyslexia fonts are also available to download online.

#### PDF Documents

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It is also possible to change background colours on PDF documents.

- At the top of the PDF file, click on the "Edit" tab.
- Scroll to the bottom and choose "Preferences".
- Click on "Accessibility".
- Check the box "Replace Document Colours"
- Choose the colour you wish to use.
- If using a school computer, please remember to change back to white when you're done!

# Study Session Planner

Date:

Subject/s:

## Check list

- |                      |                          |                  |                          |         |                          |
|----------------------|--------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|---------|--------------------------|
| Clear space          | <input type="checkbox"/> | Study soundtrack | <input type="checkbox"/> | Pens    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Minimal distractions | <input type="checkbox"/> | Highlighters     | <input type="checkbox"/> | Pencils | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Snacks & drinks      | <input type="checkbox"/> | Jotters          | <input type="checkbox"/> | Books   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Ruler                | <input type="checkbox"/> | Calculator       | <input type="checkbox"/> |         |                          |

**25 minutes study – 5 minutes break**

Tasks (highlight top 3 priorities)	✓

Achievements

Next steps

Time / Day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday