

ABOUT DYSGRAPHIA FACT SHEET



Dysgraphia is a learning disability characterised by writing difficulties (Cleveland Clinic 2022). It is also known as a specific learning disability in written expression.

Chung et al. (2020) define dysgraphia as a 'disorder of writing ability at any stage, including problems with letter formation and legibility, letter spacing, spelling, fine motor coordination, rate of writing, grammar, and composition.'

Dysgraphia is a neurological condition that presents with different symptoms at different ages and affects written expression.

It is one of the most common learning disabilities. People with dysgraphia may have trouble organising their thoughts and ideas into coherent sentences. This makes clear and concise written expression difficult.

It may co-occur with other learning disability vs disorder, including dyslexia.

See the online practice guides for full references and to find out more: edi.sa.edu.au/practiceguidance



**Government
of South Australia**

Department for Education

Understanding dysgraphia

A dysgraphia-type profile will include the following indicators:

- difficulties with written expression that are unexpected considering education and age
- slow or messy handwriting and letter illegibility
- poor pencil grip
- problems with syntax, punctuation and composition
- writing avoidance
- anxiety around writing and signs of low self-esteem or self-concept.

(SPELD NSW 2022, Chung et al., 2020)

A learner does not need a diagnosis for teachers to incorporate strategies to help them.

There are 2 kinds of dysgraphia.

Motor-based dysgraphia

Students with this type of dysgraphia struggle with the mechanical and manual aspects of handwriting. Writing becomes tiring, laborious and sometimes painful for the student.

Language-based dysgraphia

This type of dysgraphia involves delays in processing and sequencing ideas in writing. The content of the writing may be below the level expected, even if students can present their ideas clearly and concisely orally. There may or may not be difficulty in the handwriting aspects of writing.

Impact of dysgraphia on learning

Slow or sloppy writing does not mean that a student isn't trying hard enough. Writing requires a complex set of fine motor and language processing skills. For people with dysgraphia, the writing process is harder and slower.

At various stages learners might:

- have awkward writing or pencil grips
- have unexpected difficulty with handwriting, such as:
 - poorly formed or reversed letters
 - inconsistent spaces between letters or words
 - inconsistent letter sizing
- tire quickly when writing
- avoid writing or drawing tasks
- display significant discrepancy between verbal ability and writing skills
- have poor sentence and paragraph organisation
- have difficulty constructing grammatically correct sentences of varying types and remembering capital letters and punctuation (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, n.d.).

Strengths of learners with dysgraphia

Some common strengths of learners with dysgraphia can be:

- good listening skills
- strong memorisation and recall of details
- good interpersonal skills
- good oral storytelling (Guiding Bright Minds, 2021)

DYSGRAPHIA ADJUSTMENTS



EXAMPLES OF ADJUSTMENTS



Environmental adjustments

- Reduce unnecessary and distracting visual stimulation.
- Consider seating arrangements or table configurations at group time. For example, put students with higher needs closer to the teacher.
- Scaffold organisational skills, for example provide spare writing tools.
- Provide extra organisation time at the end of the lesson.



Process adjustments

- Provide explicit, direct instruction; plan and sequence new content.
- Provide multisensory learning with visual, auditory and kinaesthetic-tactile elements.
- Use assistive technology like recordings and audio books.
- Create conditions for dialogic classroom talk.



Cognitive load adjustments

- Deliver multi-step instructions one or two at a time.
- Provide scaffolds throughout the learning activity such as:
 - visual cues
 - knowledge and graphic organisers
 - checklists or tables that support the steps provided in verbal instructions.
- Provide summary notes that the learner can add to during the lesson so they don't have to copy from the board.
- Expose learners to the same content multiple times.



Organisational adjustments

- Provide visual timetables.
- Use brief verbal instructions.
- Use alarms or calendar reminders for assignment deadlines.
- Format large assignments into manageable units with regular teacher check-ins to monitor timelines.



Product adjustments

- Offer scaffolds to help with writing, such as:
 - sentence starters
 - mnemonics, for example TEEL (topic, example, explain, link) or COPS (capitals, organisation, punctuation, spelling)
 - task vocabulary charts (anchor charts).
- Use alternatives to writing such as:
 - graphic organisers to demonstrate cumulative learning throughout a unit of work
 - oral responses
 - speech-to-text assistive technology
- Provide worked exemplars of tasks to demonstrate what students need to do.

