



Understanding  
and Supporting  
Dyslexia  
Godstone  
Village School

January 2017

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# By then end of the session I will:

- Have a greater understanding of Dyslexia and the ways in which children can be affected by it.
- Understand how the Dyslexic brain functions.
- Understand and appreciate the difficulties the Dyslexic child faces in the 'formal' learning environment.
- Have a bank of strategies to support children with dyslexia.
- Be able to name some key strengths of the Dyslexic brain.

## Basic DEFINITION

- '*Dyslexia* is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling. Characteristic features of *dyslexia* are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed.

# The 'Surrey' Dyslexia situation

- Diagnosis
- High functioning
- SEN Register
- SPLD

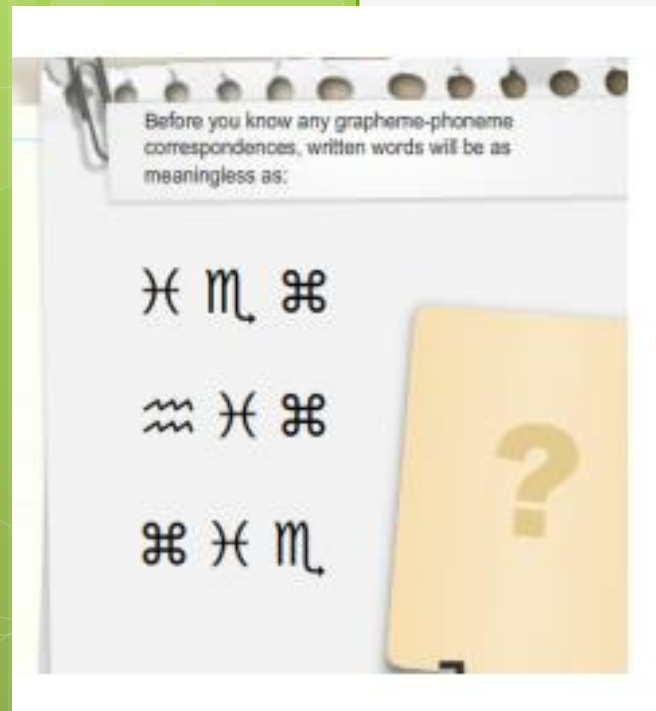
# What is dyslexia

- Which of the following statements do you think are true?
  - a. People with Dyslexic difficulties see words backwards and letters reversed.
  - b. A risk for Dyslexia can be hereditary and can run in families.
  - c. Dyslexic difficulties occur more in left-handers.
  - d. Dyslexia occurs in all ethnic groups and in all languages.

# Learning To read



Word recognition relies on deciphering the alphabetic code – the idea that each grapheme (letter/letter group) represents a phoneme (speech sound)



Here's an alphabetic code to help you read those words in an unfamiliar alphabetic system:



.....

.....

.....

⌘ = t

≈ = s

⌘ = a

ℓ = p

Can you say what those words were now?  
Probably not. Let's see them again.

Select the arrow to see the words again.

Sorry, you've probably forgotten the code. After all there were four symbols to learn!

⌘ ™ ⌘

⌘ ⌘ ⌘

⌘ ⌘ ™



Select the card for some help.



Sorry, you've probably forgotten the code. After all there were four symbols to learn!

⌘ ℓ ⌘

⌘ ⌘ ⌘

⌘ ⌘ ℓ  
^

⌘ = t

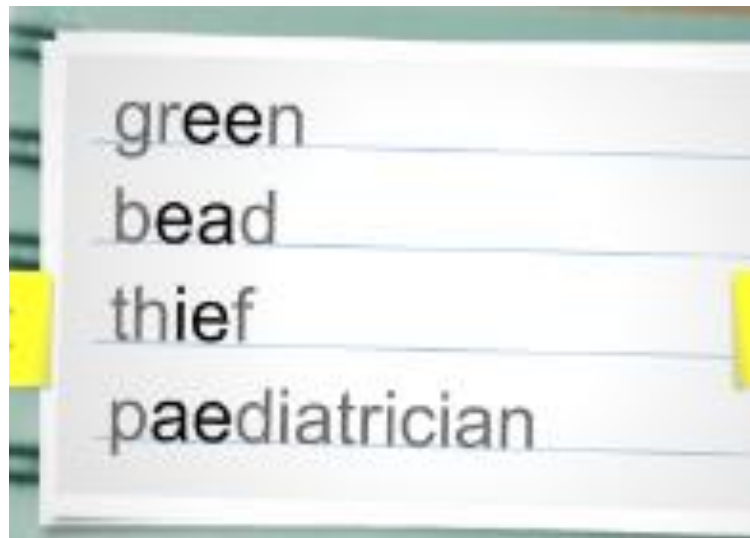
⌘ = s

⌘ = a

ℓ = p

Select the arrow to decode these words.

# The joys of the English Language!



- There are numerous graphemes that represent the same sound...

...



- We teach phonic rules, then have to teach children 'sight' words / 'tricky' words, where the phonic rules do not apply!

# The Teaching of Reading

- For all children, the teaching of Grapheme-Phoneme correspondence forms the basis of phonological reading. This should be introduced gradually and cumulatively, starting with a limited number and building this up over time.

s	sun	o-e	ode
d	dog	f	fish
m	man	ff	pull
ch	chips	ph	phone
ee	green	aw	saw
ar	farm	au	pause
oa	load	or	corn
ow	bowl		

# Phonological Dyslexia

- 75% of Dyslexic's have 'Phonological Dyslexia' a difficulty linking sounds to letters/graphemes. They struggle to identify and manipulate phonological sounds.

E.g.

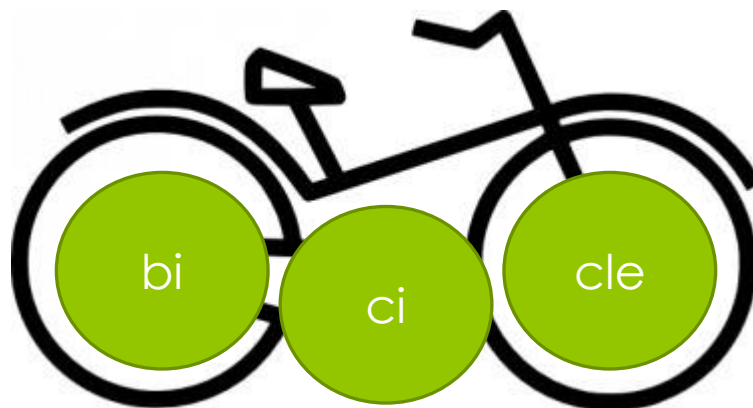
You introduce the word 'Cat' and sound out the word c-a-t. If you were to ask 'what would happen to the word if I took away the 'C'? The dyslexic child would struggle.

# Phonological Dyslexia

- These children also find:
- Rhyming and syllables difficult
- Blending – missing out sounds, getting the vowel wrong, mixing up letters, making random guesses
- When speaking – saying ‘pacific’ instead of ‘specific’ / ‘emeny’ instead of ‘enemy’
- They may also struggle to find words they want to say.

# Strategies to support phonological dyslexia

- Use pictures:



- Use actions



skip



ping

Repetition of small targets for a prolonged period and revisiting – using a wide range of strategies to store in the memory bank!

# Strategies to support phonological dyslexia

- Chunking

Chun k

## Speech Therapy Techniques

- Mirror talking– develops link to mouth changes with phonological understanding – you have to smile when you say ee
- Voice recording – record yourself saying a word that is difficult and compare it to another recording of word being said correctly.





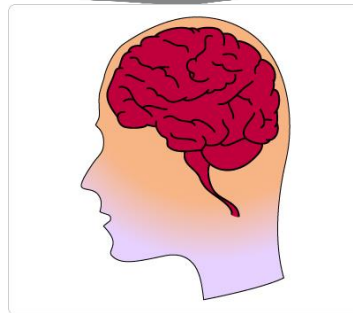
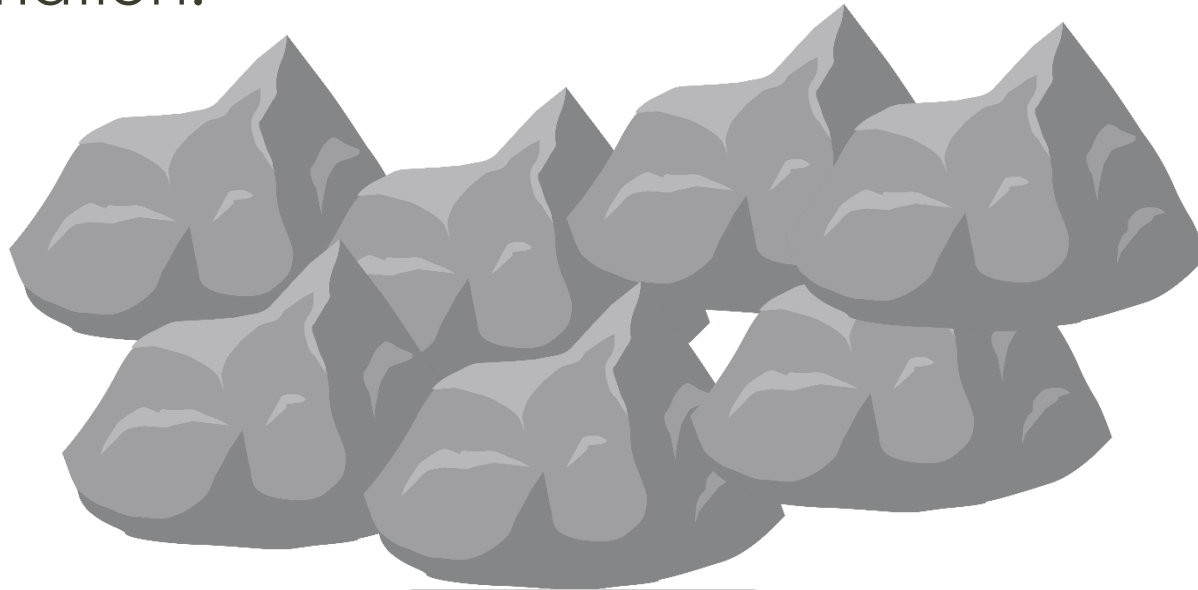
# Working Memory Difficulties

- This is the most important area of our learning system – it is essential to learning.
- Working memory difficulties are a key indicator of Dyslexia
- Working memory is like a mental work station. Information is stored there for a short period of time
- It is a very fragile memory, one distraction and the memory is lost.



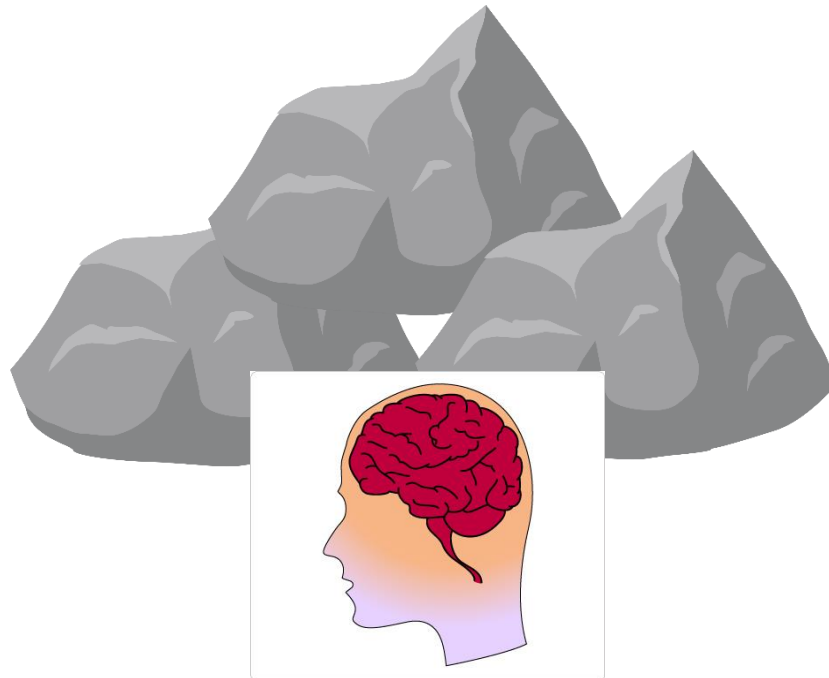
# Working Memory

- Normal working memory stores 5 – 7 chunks of information:



# Working Memory

- A Dyslexic brain will struggle to remember three.



# Working memory

- Let's check yours!!

c

x

y

h

## Working memory

- Now say the Alphabet backwards from H

# Working memory

- Can you remember the four letters?

# Working Memory

- Blending words with more than three sounds is difficult.
- Holding on to every sound in words will be tricky.  
E.g.

Stamp → Stap

# Working Memory

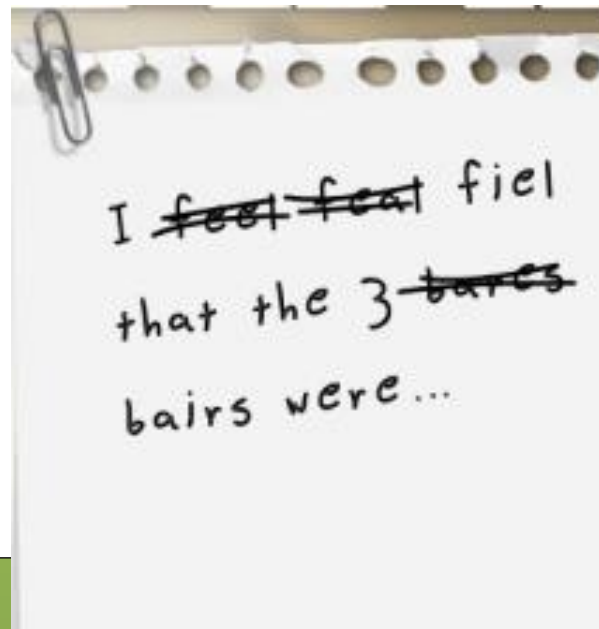
- Following a sequence of instructions is very tricky:
- Parts of instructions are lost by the time they start the activity, or even before they have finished listening to all the instructions.
- Multistep problems are very difficult.
- Very apparent in mental arithmetic – numbers have to be held in the head while the sum is worked out.
- Affects dictation – child has to hold all words in working memory while writing down.
- Comprehension – reading texts, holding onto information from the text and then reading and answering questions and trying to make links.



# Working Memory

## Why is spelling harder than reading?

- Spelling is the reverse of reading. When reading a pupil can often work out what a word says using knowledge of grapheme-phoneme correspondences but, to spell the word, they must recall which graphemes are used to represent the phonemes in that particular word:



# Spelling and working memory

- While reading presents its own difficulties for children with Dyslexia, spelling is significantly harder for Dyslexics because:
- The way memory works – spelling involves recall, whereas reading involves recognition.... The next activity demonstrates this... you will be given ten seconds to look at a list of ten words – try to remember as many as you can.... Get a pen and some paper handy!

# You have ten seconds

1. Bananas
2. Ornithologist
3. Xenopus
4. Sign
5. Rhododendron
6. Mud
7. Post
8. House
9. Baby
10. Hyperlink

# How many did you get?

- Let's try 'recognition' how many can you recognise from the list:



Did you get all ten?

Freedom

Soil

Ornithologist

Post

Bramble

House

Sign

Internet

Xenopus

Hyperlink

Apples

Mud

Baby

Bananas

Home

Letter

Toddler

Rhododendron

Flower

# Strategies to support working memory

- Chunking tasks into small steps:

s t o p

st

op

# Strategies to support working memory

- Repetition
- Repeat and rehearse information over and over to store it. E.g. instructions, directions, phonic sounds, tricky words, reading books



# Strategies to support working memory

- Name each step in the process; say it out loud!



I'm going up stairs to collect my jumper and reading diary, then I need to put my shoes on!



# Strategies to support working memory

- Use graphic organisers

Dyslexics are big picture thinkers, so visually organising information is helpful.

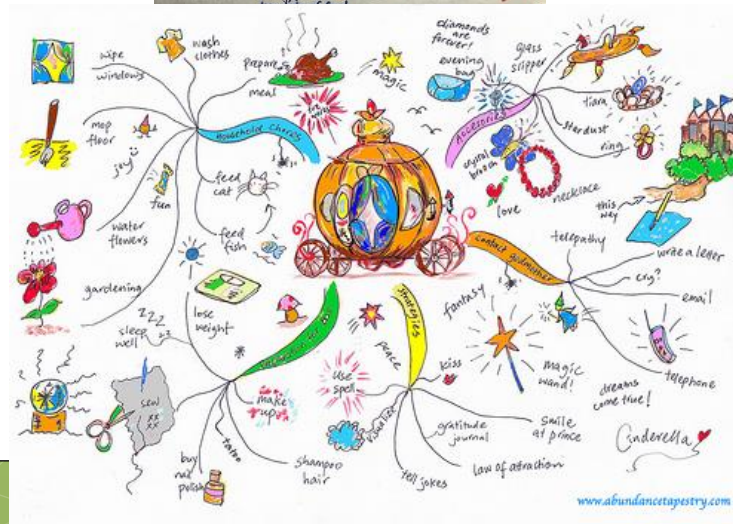
look

© Eyewire 20

2 Cor 2:14-16  
But thanks be to God, who in Christ  
always leads us in triumphal procession,  
and through us spreads the fragrance  
of the knowledge of him everywhere.  
For we are the aroma of Christ to God  
among those who are being saved  
and among those who are perishing,  
to one a fragrance from death to death,



Tony Buzan



# Strategies to support working memory

- Writing problems out

Write things down to free up memory to perform the task. Developing idea of just storing key points.



# Dyslexia and visual processing

- Visual processing as a neurological disability; not a sight issue.

This involves making sense of information taken in through the eyes. It is specific to letter and words for dyslexics (who often have excellent visual recall for pictures)

Some letters make similar sounds and are confused e.g. **e** and **i**

When a child is reading or spelling they have to hold a sequence of symbols in their head and process them into writing/words.

Therefore, a child with visual processing difficulties will have a slower reading and writing speed, causing them to make mistakes e.g. confusing similar letter shapes

**d/b** and words **saw** and **was**

# Dyslexia and visual processing



# Dyslexia and visual processing

- Visual processing as a neurological disability; not a sight issue.

Letters and numbers are written back to front, upside down and they do not have the visual recognition to self correct.

A child may know how to spell a word but output from the brain puts the letters in the wrong sequence.

Missing out letters or adding new ones is common.

Others benefit from visual recall but accessing the visual memory is difficult for 'visual' Dyslexics. They can read a word, then come across it on the next line and not recognise it.

This is why dyslexics find sight words so tricky – they cannot rely on phonics to help them.

# Dyslexia and visual processing

Visual tracking is difficult, causing Dyslexics to miss:

Words, lines, ends of  
words

Some Dyslexics report seeing words/letters moving around the page.

# Copying from the board; relying on visual memory

- Children will phonologically take in and retain information when copying down. Dyslexics will rely on visual memory instead but this is very slow....
- Try copying this Farai phrase below. As we are unfamiliar with Farai, we rely on visual memory:



# Strategies to support visual processing difficulties

- Structured phonics approach





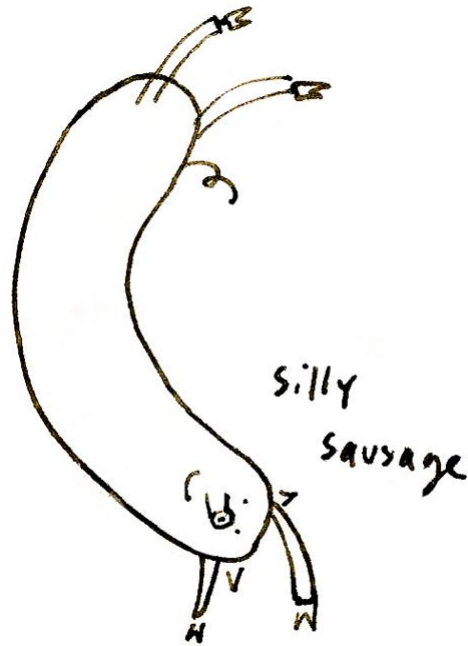
# Strategies to support visual processing difficulties

- Mnemonics

Was

A

Sausage



# Strategies to support visual processing difficulties

- Coloured paper and visual overlays



# Strategies to support visual processing difficulties

- Practicing tracking

# Strategies to support visual processing difficulties

- VAK – Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic!

Music, sound and rhythm

Touch – feel the actions

Add pictures to accompany words

# Auditory processing difficulties

- Essentially a difficulty in remembering what is heard – after a hearing test has ruled out a hearing difficulty.

'hearing dyslexia' – physically heard but lost when brain tries to process.

Signs – always asking for instructions to be repeated, difficulty remembering details.

Verbal sequencing memory is poor – times tables, months of the year, order of alphabet.

They have a short concentration span and are distracted by noise.

Picking out sounds from background noise will be very difficult.  
Spelling a word out loud will be difficult because some of the word will be forgotten.

# Strategies to support auditory processing difficulties

- Limit instructions
- Link information to pictures
- Talk at a slower pace
- Sit child closer to sound
- Eliminate background noise
- Practice rhyming and segmenting into syllables and sound blending lots!
- Phonics alongside visual strategies – otherwise will be very difficult to remember.

## Strategies to support auditory processing difficulties

- Audio books – practicing comprehension without the process of reading.

# Other strategies!

- Say word as it sounds!

Bis

cu

it

Especially good for silent letters!



# Other strategies!

- Try alternatives to learning spellings – not writing it out a few times:

## NLP!

Visualise, top left of wall, imagine colour of word, think of what the word could be sitting on, or in, look at the first letter, what comes after it... etc... work backwards too.

Repeat again the next time, what was the picture, what colour was your word.... Word on visualising.

# Other strategies!

- ◉ Linking pictures



- ◉ Can you think of one for pie or drip?

# Other strategies

- LETTER CARDS
- FLAP CARDS

# Comprehension

- First people learn to read, but later they read to learn... those with reading difficulties will hinder learning in other areas such as comprehension.
- To prevent this happening, ensure there is exposure to more complex texts that are read to them.
- Re-read books – even beyond three times to support fluency and comprehension, but also repetition to support memorising words.

# 5 things people with dyslexia are better at!

- Seeing the bigger picture
- Thinking outside the box (entrepreneurs – 40% of self-made millionaires have Dyslexia)
- Strong visualisation and good spatial awareness (architects)
- Creative ideas (writers, musicians, artists, designers)
- Pattern recognition (scientists)

The power of Dyslexia . . . The creative gift!



**British** **Dyslex!a**  
Association