

## Characteristics of Dyslexia

People with dyslexia do not all have the same characteristics, but the following are the most common.

### *Reading difficulties*

- Extremely slow rate of reading
- Blurring and distortion of words

Concluding paragraph. Essential for structuring and writing an essay is, of course, deciding what to say, how to go about assessing a particular argument for the purpose of constructing an interpretation of it.

Th is co urse wil lst riv etoeq pst ud ent swi th bas ic crit ical t hin kingan des sa ywri ting sk il ls.

- Misreading of words which are visually similar  
*was-saw, speak-break*
- Misreading multisyllabic words  
*spaghetti, inheritance, aluminum*
- Omitting connecting words  
*at, is, where, who, over, under etc.*
- Understanding complex sentences, (especially in testing situation)

*I will meet you for lunch unless you call to cancel.*

*It would be easier to say: I will meet you for lunch. Call if you need to cancel.*

- Understanding negative sentences

*Which one was not there?*

*What aspect cannot be understood?*

- Understanding long sentences

*Students will be introduced to a common essay-writing template that includes the introductory paragraph with thesis statement, three supporting paragraphs with topic sentences, and a concluding paragraph. Essential for structuring and writing an essay is, of course, deciding what to say, how to go about assessing a particular argument for the purpose of constructing an interpretation of it.*

- Reading small print below 12 to 13 points fonts
- Reading poor quality photocopies
- Reading on white paper
- Confusion with math symbols
- Reading a teacher's writing if not written very clearly.

*½ may look like y2*

*“At” may look like A+*

### ***Spelling difficulties***

- Misspelling visually similar words that are not picked up by a spellchecker

*for-from, top-pot*

- Writes the same words differently in the same passage

*enouff, enuf, enuff, ennough*

- Numerous erasures and/or cross-outs which make written work very messy
- Mixes up and/or omits letters or words
- May take up to 2000 times more to remember how to spell a word, compared to the maximum of 14 times needed by a non-dyslexic. Many famous writers never mastered spelling.

*“It’s a poor mind that can only think of one way to spell a word.”<sup>1</sup> Andrew Jackson*

“William Butler Yeats couldn’t spell worth a pin and probably couldn’t read aloud either.”

The following sentence is composed of a sample of the astonishing misspellings that pepper the letters of W.B. Yeats. They astonish because, as a poet, Yeats was fastidious, correcting and revising his work with consummate caution.

“The subtle and gorgeous originality of these vigorous Celtic letters shows such scholarship as to leave the reader feeling decidedly exhausted.” **Thomas West**

### ***Note-taking difficulties***

- Inability to read own writing
- Inability to take notes while listening
- Difficulty in writing legible notes
- Inability to write fast enough to copy from the board

### ***Writing difficulties***

- Difficulty in expressing ideas clearly in writing

---

<sup>1</sup> [www.cyber-nation.com/victory/quotations/quotes\\_menu.html](http://www.cyber-nation.com/victory/quotations/quotes_menu.html)

- Inability to write commensurate with their age/grade level
- Difficulty with sentence structure
- Difficulty with punctuation or omitting punctuation altogether
- Mixing up sounds in multisyllabic words
- Reversing letters and/or numbers

*“Only the hand that erases can write the true thing.”<sup>2</sup> Meister Eckhart*

### ***Speaking***

***While most persons with dyslexia are articulate, some may have speech difficulties.***

- Difficulty in expressing ideas clearly orally
- Speech that is fast and sometimes cluttered
- Difficulty speaking clearly during oral examinations
- Difficulty with ‘demand speech’. Which mean speaking clearly on a specific subject within a time limit or during oral examinations. However, there is no difficulty with spontaneous speech.
- Omitting and/or substituting words
- Repeating sentences, not finishing them or starting in the middle and assuming that the listener should understand.
- Difficulties with the pronunciation of multisyllabic words (aluminum, visualization etc.)
- Difficulty in finding the right word when speaking

---

<sup>2</sup> [www.cyber-nation.com/victory/quotations/quotes\\_menu.html](http://www.cyber-nation.com/victory/quotations/quotes_menu.html)

### *Listening difficulties*

- When the teacher has his/her back to students
- In a noisy room
- When the teacher uses unfamiliar words without visual support
- Misunderstanding instructions
- Misunderstanding long complex sentences
- Screening out unimportant information

### *Math difficulties*

- Memorizing multiplication tables
- Reversing numbers
- Losing place in long division
- Difficulty with word problems because of poor reading

### *Organization skills*

- Forgetting assignments and/or appointments
- Forgetting books at home or at school
- Losing papers, credit cards, car keys etc.
- Miscalculating the time needed for tasks
- Getting lost in an unfamiliar building (sometimes in a familiar building as well)
- Getting mixed up between left-right, west-east, up-down
- Difficulty telling the time ( if using a clock with hands)
- Messy desk

*“If a cluttered desk is a sign of a cluttered mind, just what does an empty desk mean?”* <sup>3</sup>**Source Unknown**

### ***Physical problems sometimes seen in persons with dyslexia***

- Migraine headache caused by fluorescent lighting or weather
- Allergies affecting listening and ability to concentrate
- Inability to concentrate under particular weather conditions
- Extreme stress during testing situations
- Unexplained days of total fatigue
- A feeling of being overwhelmed when a large amount of writing is required
- Circulation problems affecting the ability to sit still for a long period of time
- Motion sickness affecting the ability to use elevators, escalators, driving etc.
- Motion sickness caused by vertical/horizontal blinds in a room
- Visual disturbance caused by strong contrast (a teacher in a checkered/striped shirt)
- Sensitivity to perfumes, strong deodorant or chemicals
- Physical pain in wrist and hands in producing written work
- Auditory problems in the presence of background noise (someone tapping a pencil on the desk, or a noise from an adjacent room etc.)
- Sensitivity to some sounds, such as: speaker phone, hand clapping in a theater etc.)

### ***Performance of dyslexic students during tests and examinations***

Students with dyslexia are greatly disadvantaged in the examination process and may show the following symptoms:

- Discrepancy between knowledge of subject matter and performance on tests

---

<sup>3</sup> [www.cyber-nation.com/victory/quotations/quotes\\_menu.html](http://www.cyber-nation.com/victory/quotations/quotes_menu.html)

- Slow reading rate increased by blurring of words (words may jump all over the page or totally disappear)
- Stress affecting memory for simple known words (e.g.: forgetting what the word ‘division’ or ‘multiply’ means)
- Inability to produce written work on the spot
- Writing in the wrong column of the multiple-choice type questions (the columns can switch back and forth and then the student writes the wrong answer)
- Inability to write in a room with fluorescent lighting (causes words on the page to move)
- Slow reading makes understanding ‘trick’ questions next to impossible.
- Does not “see” non-image words such as: at, after, last, etc.
- Substituting a word not picked up by the spellchecker. The teacher should **not** penalize student for dyslexic type errors.

The following spelling errors, not picked up by the spellchecker, appeared on university students’ examinations papers. The students wrote:

- |                    |            |                   |
|--------------------|------------|-------------------|
| ○ <i>for</i>       | instead of | <i>from</i>       |
| ○ <i>Spanish</i>   | instead of | <i>spinach</i>    |
| ○ <i>popsicle</i>  | instead of | <i>obstacle</i>   |
| ○ <i>shoulder</i>  | instead of | <i>soldier</i>    |
| ○ <i>cruising</i>  | instead of | <i>cursing</i>    |
| ○ <i>impotence</i> | instead of | <i>importance</i> |
| ○ <i>erotic</i>    | instead of | <i>exotic</i>     |
| ○ <i>witch</i>     | instead of | <i>which</i>      |