

Living Well With Dyslexia

Living well with dyslexia is not about finding a way to stop being dyslexic. It is about understanding where written language, memory, sequencing or processing create unnecessary effort and building reliable ways around those barriers. The most useful strategies are often simple: listening instead of rereading, dictating instead of struggling to type, making information visible, using templates, breaking tasks into stages and allowing enough processing time. Support should make everyday life more accessible while preserving choice and independence.

Start with the actual barrier

'Dyslexia makes this difficult' is a useful starting point, but practical support becomes easier when the difficulty is made specific. Is dense text hard to decode? Does spelling interrupt the flow of writing? Are verbal instructions forgotten? Is organising a long document the problem? Does being watched make reading harder? Different barriers need different strategies. The goal is not to collect every possible dyslexia tool, but to identify what reliably helps in the situations that matter.

Listen when reading is exhausting

Text-to-speech, audiobooks and spoken digital content can dramatically reduce the effort required to access information. Listening is not a lesser form of understanding. Some people benefit from hearing text while following it visually; others prefer audio alone. Use audio for long documents, instructions or leisure reading when it improves comprehension or reduces fatigue. Save visual reading energy for situations where it is genuinely useful.

Use speech to get ideas out

Speech-to-text can help when ideas arrive faster than they can be spelled or typed. Dictate a first draft without trying to make it perfect, then edit the structure afterwards. This separates idea generation from spelling and keyboard demands. Voice notes can also capture thoughts before they disappear. Technology does not write the person's ideas for them; it provides another route for expressing those ideas.

Separate writing from proofreading

Trying to compose, spell, punctuate and proofread simultaneously can overload working memory. Draft first. Check later. For important writing, use a consistent sequence: check meaning, check names and dates, use spelling or grammar support, then listen to the document with text-to-speech. Hearing the words can reveal missing or repeated text that the eye has learned to overlook.

Make instructions visible

If spoken information disappears quickly, do not rely on memory alone. Write it down, ask for a follow-up message, use a checklist or photograph the information where appropriate. Break long instructions into short stages. Tick each stage when complete. Keeping information outside the brain reduces the pressure to remember while simultaneously completing the task.

Build useful templates

Repeated tasks should not have to be recreated from scratch. Keep templates for common emails, letters, forms, work reports, shopping lists or routines. A template provides structure and leaves more cognitive capacity for the content that changes. Store templates somewhere predictable and name them clearly so finding the right one does not become another task.

Organise visually

Some people find visual organisation easier than long written lists. Calendars, colour categories, icons, mind maps, labelled folders and task boards can make information easier to scan. Keep the system simple and consistent. Too many colours, apps or categories can increase rather than reduce cognitive load. A useful system should still make sense on a tired day.

Appointments and reminders

Enter appointments into one trusted calendar as soon as possible. Add plain-language information such as where to go, what to bring and when to leave. Use reminders at useful stages rather than one alarm at the appointment time. Save important letters or screenshots with the calendar entry if your system allows. The aim is to avoid repeatedly rereading the original information.

Emails

Use folders, flags or labels sparingly so important messages remain visible. For difficult emails, use text-to-speech to listen before responding. Draft replies with speech-to-text if that is easier. Keep templates for recurring messages. If anxiety causes repeated checking, create a short send routine and stop once it is complete. A five-line email should not have to consume an hour.

Forms

Read forms one section at a time. Highlight or note exactly what each box requires. Keep frequently requested information, such as contact details or reference information, in a secure accessible place so it does not need to be found repeatedly. Digital forms may allow zoom and text-to-speech. Ask for assistance or clarification when wording is unclear rather than guessing.

Names and unfamiliar words

Names, technical terms and unfamiliar vocabulary can be difficult to retrieve or spell. Keep personal word banks for frequently used terms. Add pronunciation notes if useful. Save contacts immediately rather than relying on memory. Predictive text and electronic dictionaries can reduce repeated searching. When learning new terminology, pair the written word with its spoken form.

Reading dense documents

Do not automatically start at the first word and force yourself through to the last. Look at headings first. Identify the purpose of the document. Use search functions to locate relevant sections. Break long text into smaller chunks and take brief pauses. Use text-to-speech where appropriate. For important documents, write a short summary of the action required so you do not have to process the entire document again.

Managing everyday tasks

Literacy demands are hidden inside shopping, travel, healthcare, finances and household administration. Use photographs of products, saved locations, digital tickets, labelled reminders and screenshots of important instructions. If a task repeatedly causes difficulty, design

a repeatable system rather than solving it afresh each time. Familiar pathways reduce decision fatigue.

Work and study

Ask for important information in an accessible format. Keep slides or notes available while working. Use templates for assignments and reports. Break deadlines into smaller dated stages. Use assistive technology routinely rather than saving it for crises. Where formal adjustments are needed, describe the functional barrier clearly: what happens, how it affects the task and which strategy improves access.

Reduce the pressure of reading aloud

You do not need to volunteer for unnecessary reading aloud to prove competence. If a presentation or role genuinely requires reading prepared text, practise with the material beforehand, enlarge or space the text and mark natural pauses. If unexpected reading aloud is not essential, asking for another way to participate can be a reasonable practical request.

Create a reliable checking system

Checking works better as a process than as anxious repetition. Decide what needs checking before you start. For an email, that might be recipient, meaning, names, dates and attachments. For a form, check required fields and key personal information. Use technology for spelling, then stop. A defined routine can provide more confidence than rereading the same material repeatedly.

Protect energy

Literacy-heavy days can be exhausting. Where possible, avoid stacking several demanding reading or writing tasks without a break. Complete complex written work when concentration is strongest. Use audio for some information to vary the processing demand. Fatigue is useful information: if errors increase after prolonged reading, changing the method or timing may be more effective than simply trying harder.

Ask for information differently

Useful phrases can be simple: 'Could you send that in writing?', 'Can you give me a moment to read this?', 'I process long documents better with text-to-speech', or 'Could you break those instructions into steps?' You do not need to provide a detailed explanation every time. Asking for an accessible format is a practical communication skill.

A personal dyslexia toolkit

Reading: text-to-speech, audio, reader mode and manageable sections. **Writing:** speech-to-text, predictive text, templates and separate proofreading. **Memory:** reminders, visible instructions and checklists. **Organisation:** one calendar, clear folders and simple task systems. **Checking:** a defined routine rather than endless rereading. **Communication:** ask for the format and processing time that allow you to understand and respond.

Support without losing independence

Independence does not mean refusing help. Someone can ask another person to read a letter aloud while still making their own decision. They can use a proofreader while retaining their own voice. They can ask for written instructions and still take responsibility for the task. Good support improves access without unnecessarily taking control away from the person.

Confidence through systems that work

Confidence grows when everyday situations become manageable. Successfully completing a form with text-to-speech, sending an email using a template or attending an appointment because reminders worked creates evidence of capability. The strategy is part of the success, not something that invalidates it. People routinely use technology to extend what they can do; dyslexia support is no different.

A message to take away

You do not have to read, write, remember or organise information exactly as someone else does. Use the tools. Listen to the page. Dictate the first draft. Keep the checklist. Ask for the email. Take the extra time. Build routines around the things you know are difficult. Living well with dyslexia is not about hiding the difference successfully; it is about creating enough access that dyslexia no longer gets to decide which parts of life you can participate in.

Further support

If dyslexia significantly affects education, employment or everyday life, specialist dyslexia organisations and appropriately qualified assessors can provide further information. Schools, colleges and workplaces may be able to offer appropriate support or reasonable adjustments. In employment, current UK guidance on workplace adjustments and Access to Work can also be explored where relevant. The best support begins with the individual's real-life barriers and the strategies that genuinely improve access.

Space to Breathe Therapy