

Dyslexia Strategies

Homework Tips.

1. Introduction.

Homework can be a frustrating and upsetting experience for dyslexic children and their parents on a daily basis. Below are some tips to help make homework a more profitable experience.

How much homework?

- First of all, remember: the purpose of homework is to practice something that your child is already familiar with.
- If homework is too difficult, you should discuss this with the child's teacher. Don't allow your child to become frustrated because homework tasks are beyond their skills or take too long.
- Setting smaller amounts of work and/or allowing extra time will often help.

2. Establishing a Routine.

- Develop a daily homework routine.
- A written or visual plan put in a prominent place is ideal. It should include a particular place set aside for homework and an agreed plan as to what happens after arrival home from school. It should also be flexible enough to take into account after-school activities.

A suitable homework environment.

The homework place needs to be as quiet as possible, with a cleared space for work and items required at hand eg pens, pencils, rubber, books, etc. The kitchen table is suitable if close supervision is required at busy times.

Find the best time.

Work out the best time for your child to do their homework. Keep in mind that your child may be very tired after school - they have had to work harder than their peers because of their dyslexia. They may need a break before starting homework.

You may find that doing some homework first thing in the morning can be beneficial.

Daily reading is essential.

- Lots and lots of practice is required for students with dyslexia to develop and master literacy skills.
- Read aloud with your child when they are becoming frustrated. This helps them to understand and enjoy what they are reading and it still helps them to learn.
- Your child can also read along with books on tape or CD.

- An adult reading a bedtime story to a child from a book slightly more difficult than the child can read themselves, can help the child learn new vocabulary, generate ideas and be an enjoyable experience for both.

Learning to Read.

For ideas on helping a child learn to read and other homework tips

see <http://www.arkellcentre.org.uk/Pdfs/How-to-support-your-child-at-home.pdf>

3. Getting started.

- The dyslexic student can become discouraged when faced with large amounts of work. Divide homework tasks into manageable chunks. Give breaks between tasks. Encourage your child to produce quality work rather than rushing tasks.
- Go over homework requirements to ensure your child understands what to do. Read instructions aloud when you know it is hard for them to decode accurately. If necessary, practise the first example or two with them.
- Help your child to generate ideas for writing tasks and projects before they start work. If necessary, revise vocabulary that they may need. Sometimes you may help to develop a writing plan.
- Encourage them to present work using their personal strengths - for example, they could use pictures if they are good at art. When necessary and appropriate, scribe for your child so that they can get their ideas on paper more accurately.

4. Checking and monitoring work.

- Help your child to learn editing, self-monitoring and checking skills so they can go over their own work more independently as they get older. For example, a simple process like COPS can be helpful when proof reading work: C = Capitals. O = overall appearance. P = punctuation. S = spelling.
- Teach your child to use the computer for work as they get older. Show them how to use a spell checker and encourage them to learn touch typing skills on a suggested Typing Tutor program. See www.bdatech.org for further information.
- If they are slow to complete work, encourage them to use a timer and see how much work they can complete in five minutes. But remember that if homework is regularly taking too long or is too difficult, you should discuss this with the teacher.
- Give your child lots of praise as they complete homework tasks. Be specific about what they have done well.

5. Organisation (secondary students).

- Help them develop a comprehensive, written homework plan.
- Include revision of subjects as well as set homework tasks.
- Monitor time spent on homework and results.
- Encourage your child to keep their school notes and work together in folders so they don't get lost or damaged.

- Organise notes into subjects, and ensure that they are filed regularly. Colour coding of subjects can greatly assist organisation and planning.
- If students are not writing down their required homework tasks accurately, arrange for them to check with someone in the same class at the end of the day. Or ask teachers to give them written homework instructions.
- Liaise with teachers regularly to check that students are completing homework tasks and classwork correctly and are handing in work at school.
- Check that your child is bringing correct books and equipment to school each day. Develop a visual or written plan if this is an area of difficulty.
- It is helpful to make sure that everything needed for the next school day is packed up the night before and placed by the front door.

6. Study skills (secondary students).

- Make sure that your child has effective plans for approaching tasks like essay writing, coursework, study for examinations. Talk to the school's Special Education Needs Coordinator or subject teachers about these.
- Build up independent work skills in your child and problem solving strategies when they are "stuck" or not sure of how to go about homework. For example, get your child to think about several different ways they could complete the task correctly. They can also think about who they can ask for help when they have tried other strategies.
- Revise work with your child before examinations. Encourage them to make notes, such as on coloured cards, underline or highlight key words in colour, draw pictures, etc. when studying to aid their memory.

7. Using technology (secondary students.)

Use of a computer to present homework often makes a positive difference to results in secondary school.

Access to subject textbooks, novels, etc. in audio form and alternative formats can greatly ease literacy requirements and ability to complete home and school work.

Subject based revision guides and CD-Roms can provide the opportunity for repeated learning.

See <http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/about-dyslexia/parents/reading-audio-books-and-revision-guides.html>

For information and advice on ITC and assistive technology see <http://bdatech.org/>