

## Top Tips for working with people with dyslexia

1. Give advance notice of tasks whenever possible. In particular, giving out reading materials well in advance of meetings or training session can avoid embarrassment.
2. Think about the 'degrees of distraction' around the person's workspace, are they in the middle of a room with 360 degrees of distraction or a corner with only 90 degrees of distraction? Auditory distractions from behind will be the most difficult for concentration. Ideally the best place would be with a wall behind and to the side of them.
3. Choose Arial or Tahoma font options for all typed documents and use size 12+ whenever possible. Their straight letters tend to make it easier for dyslexics to read.
4. Wherever possible try to include diagrams, flow charts or pictures within the document. Dyslexics are visual thinkers so they will access the information quicker in this format and therefore increase retention.
5. Print or copy text on coloured paper (rather than white), or provide a plastic overlay (the right colour will depend on the individual – ask them what they would prefer). You can also alter PC preferences to replace white backgrounds with colour. The contrast between black and white can be tiring for the eyes and make words appear to move about.
6. Try not to overburden people with verbal instructions. Always offer to write the main points down, tape-record them if possible or send a summary email. Again, find out what people prefer.
7. In written communication prioritise important tasks first. Bullet pointing, making sure things are well spaced out and highlighting important bits of text when circulating documents helps reading and organisation.
8. In most circumstances, the individual will be the best expert on their own preferences – empower your colleagues to let you know how they would like to communicate and work.
9. Consider the positive aspects of dyslexia – creativity, innovation, hands-on approaches and imagination, to name but a few. Dyslexics are not restricted to prescribed, linear formats and can come up with inventive solutions to old problems.
10. Check out specialist software such as Spark-Space (concept mapping that translates from spatial to linear form, designed by people with dyslexia, for people with dyslexia) and Read & Write (text to voice software with dyslexia friendly spell check and dictionary function)