

DUDLEY DYSLEXIA ASSOCIATION
Helpline 01384 291001

www.dudleydyslexia.co.uk (34)

Reasonable Adjustments in the Workplace.

Many people with dyslexia require little in the way of support beyond the acceptance that they will need to approach some task differently.

When dyslexic people understand their dyslexia they are more able to participate in their continuing education and succeed in their areas of choice.

Experience suggests that the majority of dyslexic adults are relieved to discover their dyslexia. It enables them to understand their educational history and put past experiences into context.

As the severity of dyslexia varies so do the strategies that help people overcome problems in employment. The majority of these are inexpensive and uncomplicated. However, should additional costs be incurred, for example a voice activated computer or reader the employer can apply for funding through the Government's Access to Work scheme.

Assessment.

A professional assessment may be required to identify specific work needs.

It is important to brief the specialist (usually an occupational psychologist) on your requirements from the assessment. For example you need to know how this will affect their work and what sort of adjustments may help the employee perform more effectively at work.

Suggested Strategies.

The following have proved successful for many. Any individual may require none, one or several of the strategies. Within each category are a number of suggestions. The person's pattern of dyslexia may make some of these inappropriate.

Written Communication.

General difficulty with reading:

Give verbal rather than written instructions. Highlight salient points in documents. Use voice mail as opposed to written memos. Use speech to text software. Supply/use a reading machine – or allocate someone else to read aloud. Provide information on coloured paper (find out which colour helps the person to read best). Set up a computer screen with a coloured background to documents.

Difficulty with reading and writing:

Allow plenty of time to read and complete the task.

Examine other ways of giving the same information to avoid reading.

Discuss the material with the employee, giving summaries and/or key points.

Utilise information prepared in other formats for example audio or videotape, drawings, diagrams and flowcharts. Use tape recorders. Use speech to text software.

Spelling and grammar errors:

Proof read work. Instant spell checker on all computers.

Verbal Communication.

Difficulty remembering and following verbal instructions: Give instructions one at a time.

Communicate instructions slowly and clearly in a quiet location. Write down important information. Demonstrate and supervise tasks and projects. Encourage the person to take

notes and then check them. Ask instructions to be repeated back, to confirm that the instruction has been understood correctly. Write a memo outlining a plan of action. Use a tape recorder or dictaphone to record important instructions. Back up multiple instructions in writing or with diagrams. **Difficulty with hidden meanings in conversation:** Give clear concise and direct instructions; do not hint or make assumptions that you have been understood.

Time and Work Planning.

Concentration difficulties/distractions:

Make sure the workplace is quiet and away from distractions for example away from doors, busy phones, loud machinery. Allocate a private workspace if possible.

Where feasible allow an employee to work from home occasionally.

Provide a quiet working environment for a dyslexic employee by allocating libraries, file rooms, private offices and other enclosed areas when others are not using them.

Coping with interruptions:

Use a “do not disturb” sign when specific tasks require intense concentration.

Encourage co-workers not to disturb the person unless absolutely necessary.

When interrupting, allow the person to pause and write down what they are doing to refer to when resuming work.

Ensure that each task is completed before starting another.

Encourage outgoing rather than incoming calls. Offer training in how to use the telephone effectively for example jotting down key points before making the call.

Remembering appointments and deadlines:

Remind the person of important deadlines and review priorities regularly.

Hang a wall planner that visually highlights daily/monthly appointments, deadlines, tasks and projects. Supply an alarm watch.

Encourage the employee to use the daily calendar and alarm features on his/her computer.

Organisation of property:

Ensure that work areas are organised, neat and tidy.

Keep items where they can be clearly seen for example shelves and bulletin boards.

Ensure the team returns important items to the same place each time.

Colour code items. Ensure work areas are well lit.

Organising workflow:

Supply and use a wall planner. Prioritise important tasks. Create a daily, dated “To Do” list. Use diaries. Write a layout for regular tasks with appropriate prompts for example for meetings or taking notes. Allow extra time for unforeseen occurrences.

Build planning time into each day.

General difficulties.

Reversing numbers:

Encourage the person to say the numbers out loud, write them down or press the calculator keys and check the figures have been understood. Supply a talking calculator.

Directional difficulties:

Always try to use the same route. Show the route and visible landmarks. Give time to practice going from one place to another. Supply detailed maps.

Short term memory problems especially names, numbers and lists:

Use mnemonic devices and acronyms. Organise details on paper so that they can be referred to easily using diagrams and flowcharts. Check back understanding. Use multi-sensory learning techniques such as reading material onto a tape machine and then playing it back whilst re-reading. Use computer software; sometimes well developed programme menus and help features are useful. Use a calculator.