



© Lance McCaughan

A Guide for Educators Supporting Adult Dyslexic Learners

Principles for supporting a dyslexic learner

Knowledge

Understand dyslexic learners have different combinations of dyslexic characteristics.

Each dyslexic person has a unique perspective on the world, this is a strength not a limitation, celebrate them.

Recognise

Identifying and building dyslexic strengths is the key to dealing with dyslexia.

Focusing on the dyslexic learner's strengths diminishes the other effects of dyslexia, encourages creativity, resilience, and resourcefulness.

Acknowledge

There are emotional impacts of being dyslexic in a non-dyslexic world.

Everyone needs to hear more affirmation of what they are good at to build persistence and self-advocacy. Encourage the learner to reflect on their dyslexic experiences and acknowledge all they have achieved. This helps to build persistence.

Individualised Approaches

Recognise that dyslexia manifests differently in each individual and adopt personalised strategies to accommodate their specific needs. Understand that dyslexic learners may require additional time and support to process information, organise their thoughts, and respond.

Strategies

- Provide extra time for tasks and offering alternative methods of expression can alleviate the pressure and facilitate learning such as visual aids, multimedia presentations, and verbal explanations.
- Difficulty with writing could be mitigated through assistive technology or alternative methods of demonstrating understanding.
- Offer practical and hands-on learning opportunities that cater to the strengths of dyslexic individuals, such as online learning and practical, skill-based education.
- Provide opportunities for alternative forms of learning and assessment.



Acknowledge Strengths and Build Confidence

Highlight and nurture the strengths and talents of dyslexic learners.

Strategies

- Celebrate their abilities to bolster the dyslexic learner's confidence and motivation to overcome challenges.
- Foster resilience and determination in dyslexic learners by encouraging a growth mindset and emphasising the importance of perseverance in achieving goals.
- Create a positive feedback loop by offering specific and constructive feedback that acknowledges the efforts and progress of dyslexic learners and asks for their feedback in return.

Create a Supportive Learning Environment

Foster a supportive environment where dyslexic learners feel comfortable seeking help and assistance, values neurodiversity, and fosters a sense of belonging for dyslexic learners. **Acknowledge** there are emotional impacts of being dyslexic in a non-dyslexic world.

Strategies

- Mentors who believe in the learner's potential influence the transformative impact of supportive relationships in overcoming self-doubt and building resilience.

- Establish peer mentorship or buddy systems where dyslexic learners can connect with peers who have similar experiences or receive support from neurotypical classmates. This promotes a sense of community and belonging while also encouraging mutual understanding and empathy among students.
- Encourage open discussions about learning differences and provide opportunities for students to share their experiences and strategies for success.
- Implement classroom policies and practices that accommodate diverse learning styles.

Encourage Self-Advocacy

Recognise the need for and offer personalised support, encouraging dyslexic learners to advocate for their own needs to navigate dyslexia-related challenges. Identifying and building dyslexic strengths is the key to dealing with dyslexia.

Strategies

- Emphasise the importance of perseverance and a positive mindset.
- Encourage learners to reflect on their strengths, challenges, and progress in managing their dyslexia.
- Facilitate discussions around setting realistic goals and identifying strategies to overcome obstacles.

Find out more

- View the full report and resources on Ako Mai Me – Adult Dyslexic Learner Journey project page
- Read the different dyslexic tertiary learner profiles in the Ako Report.
- Links to more information on how educators can support dyslexic learners:
<https://www.dyslexiafoundation.org.nz/>
<https://dyslexia.ie/info-hub/how-teachers-can-help/>

This guide is part of the Ako Mai Me project by Dr Linda Rowan and Dr Lesley Petersen, funded by Ako Aotearoa (National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence).

Go to <https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/ako-mai-me-the-adult-dyslexic-learner-journey-and-experience/> to download resources and the report free.

