

# Southwark Dyslexia

## School's Information Pack

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# Dyslexia or Literacy Difficulties? Does it matter?

## What is Dyslexia?

Struggling with literacy difficulties is a common challenge throughout the world. Though differences in regions of the world occur to the challenges presented by each language (e.g. Spanish has fewer phones than English, while Japanese may have three alphabets but all of their writing is able to be phonically decoded), along with societal and economic factors, there is agreement that literacy difficulties present across the full range of intellectual abilities (Stuebing et al, 2002.)

Literacy difficulties is sometimes termed 'dyslexia' but dyslexia itself has no clear definition in the UK and indeed there are multiple definitions used by different organisations. There is also constant debate over whether dyslexia itself should be recognised and labelled – on one side, there are practitioners who value the term and believe it is vital to label the condition, and on the other there are those who are concerned with pathologising childhood and identifying the problem as being within-child (Solvang, 2007.)

It is also important to note that dyslexia is a learning difficulty, not a learning disability, because dyslexia itself has no impact on cognitive ability.

## Dyslexia and poor literacy: is there a difference?

It is accepted that the primary sign of dyslexia is the difficulty in acquiring literacy skills. However, this is not the main difficulty in identifying dyslexia – the challenge is in identifying those who have dyslexia and those who have poor literacy skills. Though there seems to be a familial link in many people who have dyslexia, it is not possible to identify specific cognitive markers in dyslexia individuals, nor are there any biological tests (Peterson and Pennington, 2012.)

A definition of dyslexia was produced by the British Psychological Society in 2005 and is still used today. In this definition, there is no clear boundary between dyslexia and other literacy difficulties because there are so many similarities and the same challenges exist for all these learners. This definition says that, “dyslexia is evident when accurate and fluent word reading and/or spelling develops very incompletely or with great difficulty. This focuses on literacy learning at the “word level” and implies that the problem is severe and persistent despite appropriate learning opportunities. It provides the basis for a staged process of assessment through teaching.”

Despite this, there are those for whom the term dyslexia can feel important. It can allow people to explain their difficulties more clearly and to explain that those difficulties are not as a result of cognitive difficulties. Some services still require the use of a 'label' to access them. Some research

has pointed to the diagnosis supporting people's self-esteem (Gibson and Kendall, 2010), however others have said that the label can negatively affect children's views of themselves (Polychroni et al, 2006), while others have pointed to the label stopping teachers from finding new ways to work with those learners.

Recent research has pointed to the idea that dyslexia is biological as a reason for learners with the label to have increased self-esteem as they are not seen as being 'to blame' for their challenges. On the other hand, learners with literacy difficulties without the label can receive more negative judgments. Learners questioned felt the label was important for them to gain support, though they acknowledged it also gave the possibility of discrimination (Gibby-Leversuch et al, 2021).

## **Dyslexia support and intervention**

Access to appropriate support and intervention should not be dependent on the use of a label. In the UK, exam access arrangements (Joint Council for Qualifications, 2021) do not require diagnosis but are available to those who require reasonable adjustments to be made in order to access assessments. In other words, those with a diagnosis of dyslexia and those without but with the same literacy difficulties should be afforded the same exam access arrangements in order to 'level the playing field'. With or without a diagnosis, a specialist literacy assessment can be useful in identifying needs and ways of meeting them.

All young people should be able to access appropriate setting based assessment, intervention and support from the time their needs first become noticeable. Teaching should be adjusted and differentiation used to support learners who are struggling to acquire literacy skills. As outlined by the Department for Education (2015), schools must adopt the 'assess, plan, do, review' graduated approach as a model through which to intervene in order to ensure that appropriate support and intervention is in place early enough to make a difference. Whether someone has been diagnosed with dyslexia, or just struggles with literacy, there should be no difference in how and when they are supported.

# Quality First Teaching for Pupils with Literacy Difficulties

- Make sure all texts are uncluttered, have a simple and a rounded font, use double line spacing and contain visuals clues that support the overall meaning.
- Important information contained in a text should be clearly signposted – think about using boxes or highlighting.
- Limit copying – can the pupil have their own table top copy to interact with?
- Remember that the pupil will be working much harder than their peers to deal with written information and language. Allow for fatigue by building in natural rest breaks.
- Give key subject-specific vocabulary as a bookmark or a table mat with accompanying pictures to support spelling. The pupil could help make these as part of a pre-teaching activity to make them personally relevant.
- Ensure that the readability of all texts provided is at the appropriate level for the pupil's ability.
- Where possible offer alternatives to writing large amounts. Teach the strategic use of mind maps, bullet points, lists, tables, diagrams and the use of a scribe. Ensure that the pupil has opportunities to demonstrate the true level of their knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Offer the use of voice recording devices. These can be used in many ways such as: to record instructions, ideas, messages for home and intentions for writing.
- Provide any texts the pupil needs to read in advance of the lesson. Allow them to highlight key points, add sub-headings and record any questions that they may have.
- Provide visual task timelines to help pupils with place keeping for multi-step tasks.
- Revisit and revise regularly.

# Activities and Programmes Which Can Help

## Spelling

**Writing the letters:** It is vital that this must be in place first. If an individual cannot form letters accurately and automatically they are unlikely to be able to spell efficiently as too much effort is required to link the correct symbol to the individual sound. They can be helped to master this skill by practising pencil/pen hold and letter-formation in a fun way.

If the individual is older or is still finding this very difficult, it may be worth teaching them to use a key board. They may need lots of practice, and it should be as multisensory as possible, so the individual says the sound and the name of each letter as they write it.

Recap on learning a new letter:

- Trace the letter, and say its sound and its name.
- Practice writing the letter on your own, saying the sound and name.
- Write the letter very large; write it in sand or on carpet, etc.
- Cover previous examples and write the letter from memory, again saying the sound and name.
- Do it again with your eyes closed.

Rainbow writing can also be useful here (writing over the same letter or word again and again in many different colours).

### Using phoneme-grapheme links

The individual must know that this is the first step in spelling. Poor phonological awareness or poor articulation may prevent them from hearing sounds in words clearly.

Once they can say and write two sounds (at, in), they have 'cracked the code' and should continue to extend to c-v-c words (pat, tin, etc.) and then word with consonant blends, both at the beginning and the end of the words (trip, sand).

### More advanced phonics

Different ways of spelling long vowels are best tackled one at a time in family groups. For instance, ensure that the individual has learned a useful group of 'ee' words before presenting them with 'ea' words, rather than trying to learn these two groups together.

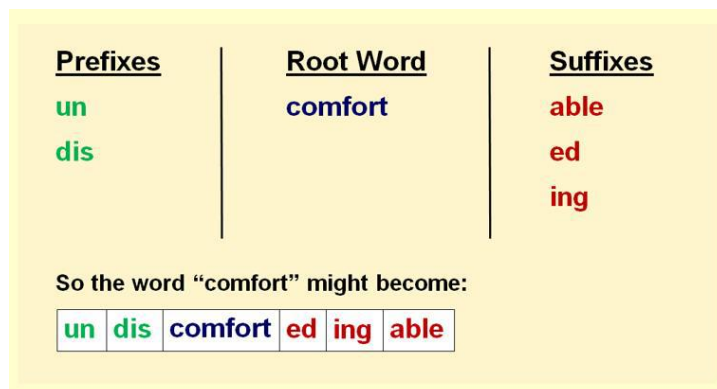
A common error is to try and introduce these choices too quickly. It is vital that each group is practiced carefully and thoroughly before the next one is introduced and that they are taught in the order in which they most frequently occur in words.

## Syllables

Longer words are effectively just a collection of syllables. The individual should say and spell these words syllable-by-syllable. Work done on syllable division to help develop reading skills will also be very helpful for spelling.

## Analogy

The individual needs to think of words in groups so that they can make comparisons to help them. If a spelling eludes them, try giving a hint: “Bread rhymes with head, so will that help you spell bread?” or “What’s the root word in jumping? Can you spell jump?”



Giving learners random lists of words to remember is unlikely to be effective and traditional spelling tests actually encourage the dyslexic learner to view each word within the English language in isolation and as something that has to be remembered individually. Such an approach is doomed to failure as there simply isn't enough capacity in an individual's memory to store all the words that they would ever want to use. Instead, focusing on the consistency of the language aids the development of transferable knowledge.

## Spelling rules

The suffixing rules do not have many exceptions:

- add
- double the consonant
- drop the e
- change the i to y, etc

Therefore they are worth teaching and referring to.

There are many useful spelling rules that can be very helpful to explain what otherwise appears to be inexplicable, but they are not infallible (e.g.: “When two vowels go out walking, the first one does the talking” applies well to ea, oa).

One of the major problems with spelling rules is actually the fact that many individuals who are supporting or teaching spelling aren’t aware of them. This isn’t surprising as most people either don’t need them or will apply them automatically on an almost subconscious level. For the dyslexic learner, however, they can be a vital part of the puzzle and should be part of the essential “tool kit” for anyone teaching spelling. Spelling rules and patterns will be looked at more closely in a separate section of this module.

## **Mnemonics**

If a word is proving very tricky, and does not fit a particular pattern, then memory tricks or mnemonics can be effective.

- ‘Spelling language’: saying every sound in the word (e.g.: Wed-nes-day, par-li-a- ment).
- Silly sentences: for example, linking remembering the spelling of the word ‘because’ using the sentence “Big elephants can’t always use small exits”.
- Silly phrases: “Oh, you lovely duck” to remember the -ould pattern in could, would, should, etc.
- Drawing pictures that link similar words can also be helpful.

## **High Frequency Words**

### **Ideas for everyday practice**

- Make sure students read text containing high frequency words every day. Almost all text contains these words, but the most rewarding reading will come from books students can read easily.
- Using real text, encourage learners to go through the passage highlighting the high-frequency word/words that they are focusing on.
- Create a word wall of high-frequency words. Add new words to the wall as they are introduced. Each day, students can chant or cheer the high-frequency words posted on the wall. Be careful that the word wall does not become overcrowded as this can cause problems for dyslexic individuals with visual searching skills
- Introduce words in small groups, but only as many as the learner can cope with easily. If words naturally fall into families such as “would / should / could” then introduce them together.
- Make sure that the learner understands these words and how they affect the meaning of the sentence. Give plenty of examples and encourage the learner to come up with their own.

- Encourage students to write the words as often as possible. They may practice individual words or write high-frequency word sentences such as "I like to \_\_\_\_\_," or "We go by the \_\_\_\_\_."
- Keep a checklist of high-frequency words. When a student has memorised a word (i.e.: he or she can read it without decoding or write it without seeing the word) allow the learner to tick it off on the checklist or use other reward systems.
- Use paired reading. This is where the helper reads most of the words in the text whilst following the text with a finger or pointer and the learner follows. When a high-frequency word is encountered the reader reads it and then the helper continues with the rest of the text.
- Using timed reading activities can help to improve fluency and automaticity. Use this technique with caution to avoid causing unnecessary anxiety or stress.
- Using plastic or wooden letters jumbled up, show the learner a word and ask them to read it. Then ask them to recreate the word using the letters and then read it again.
- Playing games can be very helpful. Almost any simple game can be slightly modified to accommodate high-frequency word instruction. Bingo is a consistent favourite. Whilst playing bingo, monitor learners as you call out each word to ensure that they recognise the high-frequency words and place chips on them when appropriate. Other simple games that can help teach words include common favourites like hangman.
- As many of these high-frequency words don't actually have a specific meaning (and therefore a clear image attached to them), the Davis approach can sometimes be of use. In this approach, the learner is encouraged to model what they perceive the image/shape of the word to be out of clay or another modelling material (or drawing if desired). This image isn't the letters of the word; it is simply a shape or particular image that the learner can then link to the word in the future.

## **Louder and Louder**

Have learners begin reading the words on the word wall in a whisper. As they go along, have them gradually increase the volume until they are shouting by the last word.

## **"Jeopardy"**

- Lay several high-frequency word cards face up on the floor.
- Have learners sit in a circle around the cards.
- One learner mentally chooses a word and gives a clue about it, for example: "This word begins with a b."
- The learner can continue to give clues ("It rhymes with tall.") until another learner is the first to touch the correct card.
- The learner who guesses correctly gets to choose the next word and give the next set of clues.

## **Memory cards**



- Create two-word cards for each high-frequency word.
- Lay the cards face down on the floor.
- Learners take turns trying to match identical words.
- The learner with the most pairs wins.

## **Funny Voices**

Flash the word cards to learners, and have each learner read a word in a funny voice (e.g.: a robot voice, an old voice, a squeaky voice, and a monster voice, etc.).

## **Swat!**

- Divide learners into two teams, each team standing on one side of the word wall.
- Give the first learner in each team a flyswatter.
- Read a word from the word wall.
- The first team to swat the word gets a point.
- The swatter then passes the flyswatter to the next team member.

## **Making Sentences**

- Hand out one flashcard to each learner. Some learners will receive word flashcards and some will get picture flashcards.
- Encourage them to have fun as they play with standing next to each other in various combinations and arrangements in order to make sentences using their cards.
- Alternatively come up with your own games using "human sentences."

## **Dice bingo**

- Write high-frequency words in a numbered column.
- The learner rolls a die and reads the word that corresponds with that number in the column.
- If they are able to read the word successfully, they can colour in or place a counter on the square on the column.
- This can be done as a competition using two (or more) columns of words. The winner is the individual that colours in/covers up all the words in the column.

## **Rainbow writing**

The learner writes over the target word in a range of colours. It is important that the learner says the word and spells it out loud as they write over it, and then reads it again when they get to the end to reinforce multisensory links.

## Reading activities

- Encourage preparation time before reading aloud.
- Glance through. Highlight new and/or unusual vocabulary. Discuss definitions and the contextual use of words.
- Colour capital letters green and full stops red to draw attention to punctuation. Similar techniques can be used for more advanced punctuation.
- Mark the phrasing in a sentence with a pencil.
- “Little” words carry much meaning but are often misread. Draw attention to them; for example, circle ones you know the learner has problems with before reading.
- Use a marker (e.g.: finger or pencil or reading ruler) running beneath the lines, or a marker in the margin, to help the eyes track more smoothly and avoid losing their place. Force the eyes to move on, increasing speed.
- Encourage shared/paired reading.
- Provide plenty of re-reading of words, phrases, sentences or stories.
- Use timers and a progress chart to motivate the learner. Help them to see the improvement that comes with practice.
- Tracking letters and whole words are activities that can also be useful. For tracking letters, simple worksheets can be made up which basically comprise lines of random letters typed onto a sheet. Within each line there you need to include the sound that the learner is working on. Ideally the line should include a range of different fonts to help the learner become familiar with such different symbol representations, but this can be done in a graduated way if necessary. The same principle can be applied for tracking words. For example:  
C a t s a t f a t

## Memory and active learning activities

Many learners, both dyslexic and non-dyslexic, think that if they read something it will be automatically absorbed into their memory. Sadly, this is not always the case. Outlined below are some suggested strategies to ensure that individuals are not only active readers but active learners and so are engaging with the new information. Learning is, after all, an active process rather than a passive one.

In order for a dyslexic individual to deal with issues associated with memory, they have to become active learners as active learning is by nature more multisensory. Not all of the strategies below will work for everyone, but it's worth identifying which ones work best for any particular individual.

Some suggested strategies for active learning could involve getting the learner to:

- Summarise a passage in 8–12 words. This encourages reflection on what has been read.
- Make a mind map.

- Think of between three and five real life examples of what has been learned. This helps with applying the learning.
- Work out which they think is the best example and why. This will help with prioritising and evaluating.
- List 20 questions about the subject: what / why / how / where, etc.? This helps with exploring the information.
- Answer their own questions. This helps with revising and organising information.
- Draw a diagram or cartoon to illustrate a point.
- Write action plans of things to do.
- Teach what has been learned to a real or imaginary person.
- Sum up which is the most important points. This helps to practice evaluating and summarising.
- Make a large plan about everything that has been learned about the subject.
- Pretend that they disagree with everything that you are learning. How would they argue their case? What examples and evidence would they use?
- Connect what they have learned to their everyday life.
- List all the key points and draw a symbol that represents each one.
- Discuss their ideas with others.
- Write key points on sticky notes, then juggle them around to see how many ways they could be organised differently.
- Set achievable goals about what they need to learn, and break these down into SMART objectives. Make sure that they take breaks!

## Comprehension activities

All of the strategies suggested so far in this topic will help with comprehension, but the more practice a learner has of comprehension itself, the better.

- From a very early stage, encourage skills of prediction. Flick through a book and ask: “What do we see? Who is in it? What do you think it is about?”
- Stop at intervals in the learner’s reading, round up meaning, and then re-anticipate: “What do you think they will do now?”
- Provide words they cannot read to maintain the flow.
- Encourage pre-reading: establish the purpose of the reading, preview and review vocabulary, activate background knowledge and predictions.
- During reading: draw the learner’s attention to characters, settings, problems and solutions.

- After reading: ask the learner to summarise main ideas and monitor their own understanding.
- Pose a range of questions to check comprehension, moving beyond the literal level to questions which demand deductions and inference, analysis and evaluation of ideas in the text, and an appreciative response.
- Encourage silent reading and question formulation. Ask the learner to jot down four or five questions based on their reading, and then give you a minute or so with the book before you have to answer them. This is another good revision strategy as the questions can be used at a later date to remember the information that has been read.
- Encourage the learner to visualise characters and plot of a story or text.
- Wherever possible use text that is interesting for the individual.

### Phonemic segmentation activities

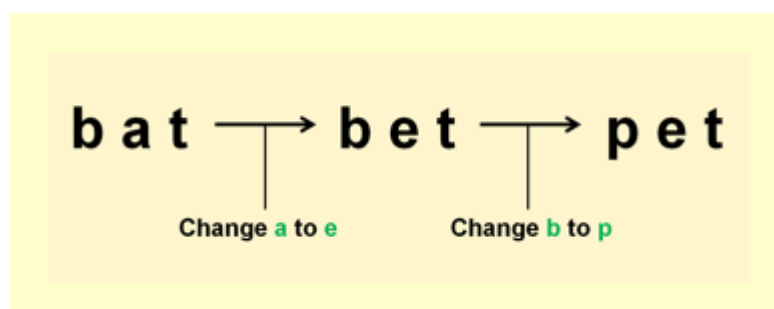
This is the ability identify individual sounds in words and separate them out. Activities to develop this skill could include some of the following:

Ask the learner to find all the words on the page which:

- end with a given sound, or have the same vowel sound, or begin or end with the same consonant cluster.
- once they have done this, ask them to think of some more words with the same feature (this is harder than the first part of this exercise because you can't always use visual clues)

Say a word from a passage that the learner has just read (take the text away first) and ask them to tell you the sound (sound, not letter) of

- the initial consonant sound or blend
- the final consonant sound or blend
- the vowel sound



Note: choose a word that can be split up easily (for example, “Anemone” or “hair” would be less helpful in this exercise than “frost” or “rabbit”).

Ask learners to count the sounds (phonemes) in a word without looking. Then compare the number of sounds with the number of letters in the word, to demonstrate that this is not always the same.

A simple but effective activity is to ask the learner to identify where in a word they hear a particular sound. For example:

- Where do they hear the “a” sound in “ant”? At the beginning.
- Where in “bat”? In the middle.
- And where in the more complicated “banana”?.....

This is a useful activity to practice auditory sequential discrimination.

Alliteration:

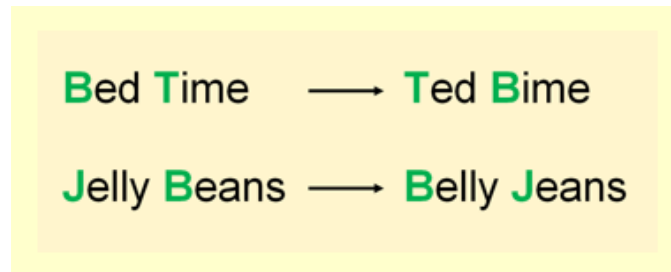
- Ask the learner to find all the words on the page which begin with a given sound, then to think of more words beginning with that sound.
- Alternatively ask the learner to make an alliterative sentence from a given sound, for example, the start of their name. E.g.: Helen has happy hips, Chelsea chases cheerful chicks, etc.
- A dictionary can be a useful tool to identify words beginning with the same sound and can again be a very useful activity to develop vocabulary. Simple activities such as trying to think of as many animals as possible that start with a particular letter can be a fun way of reinforcing this.
- Such activities can be further developed into competitions or challenges when an element of time is added. For example, in a group tasking each individual to think of as many footballers whose surnames begin with the letter W in 30 seconds can liven things up.
- Using your own name think of an alliterative sentence using:  
4 words  
8 words  
15 words!

Rhyme is often something that dyslexic individuals struggle with and is often included within assessment activities. Inability to recognise rhyme can sometimes be viewed as an early warning sign of literacy difficulties in young children.

- Select a word, then ask learners think of as many words as possible that rhyme with it.
- “Odd one out”: select 3 words, 2 of which rhyme. Learners have to spot which word doesn’t match. E.g.: [pot / hot / log] or [fat / cat / pit].
- For older learners, looking at poems, song lyrics or raps can be a topical way of developing these skills.
- Alternatively a selection of rhyming words can be given and learners asked to develop their own lyric, rap or poem.

A more challenging version of the above would be spoonerisms. A spoonerism is where you take two words and take the first sound off the first word and put it on the second word then take the first

sound off the second word and put it on the first word. These are very difficult for dyslexic learners as they rely heavily on short term and working memory as well as good phonological skills, but can be useful to challenge more able learners.



## Syllable activities

Early syllable work:

Count the number of syllables by:

- Clapping
- Beating a percussion instrument
- Singing
- Placing a hand beneath your chin and counting the movements.

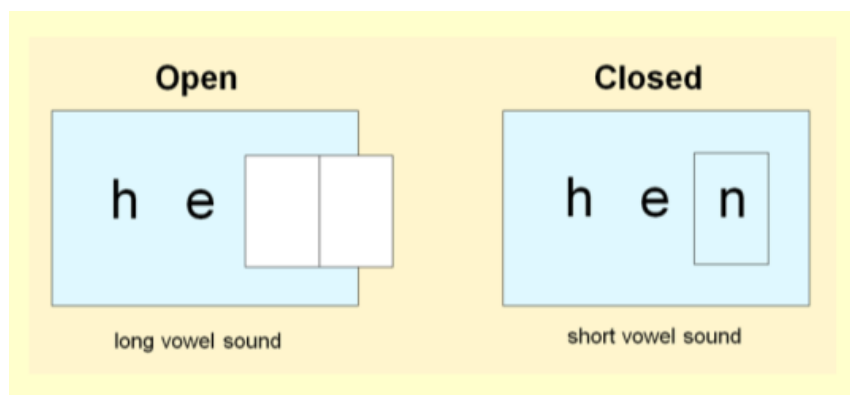
Use picture cards to play:

- Snap! (matching the picture to the correct number of syllables in the word)
- Pairs or pelmanisms
- Dominoes, etc.

More advanced syllable work:

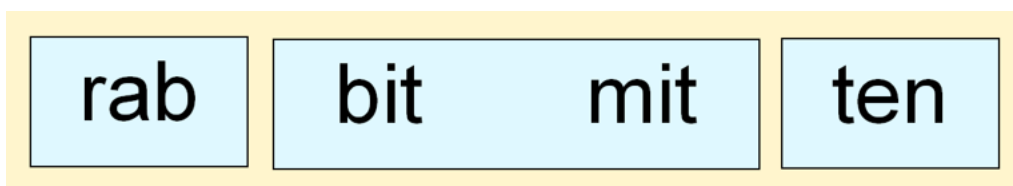
Open/closed doors: this is an activity that can help reiterate the difference in pattern for long and short vowel sounds. It uses short, one-syllable words with the pattern c-v-c in order to present the concept in as simple a way as possible.

- The chosen word is written on a piece of card, with the end consonant written on a “door” or flap.
- When the door is “open”, the vowel has a long sound that can go on and on, as there is nothing at the end of the word.
- When the door is “closed”, the consonant at the end of the word “blocks” the vowel from making its long sound, so it has to make its short sound instead.

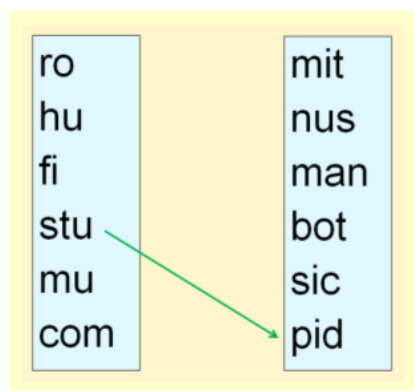


Once learners are more confident with multi-syllable words, you can introduce further games and activities to check their understanding. For example:

- Finding and Drawing / Cutting: Words are written on a piece of card. The learner has to identify where the syllables divide the word and either draw it on or cut the word into “chunks” accordingly.
- Dominoes: Learners must match each syllable chunk with another that makes it a real word. This can be done by creating cards which have two very different syllable chunks at each end (the learner must match the correct chunk to either end). Alternatively, the learner takes a syllable card and matches it with an “end” syllable to make a real word. They then use this “end” syllable chunk as the beginning syllable for the next word, and have to find a new “end” syllable to make another real word, and so on. For example: rab-bit / bit-ten / ten-ant, etc.



- Syllable Match: Syllable “chunks” are laid out in two columns:
  - o Column 1 = beginning syllables
  - o Column 2 = end syllables
  - o Learners must match up the syllables from each column to create real words.



- Syllable Counting

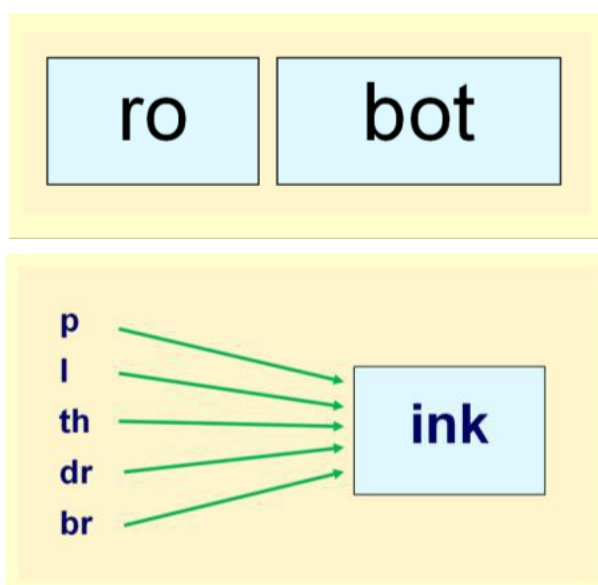
- o Ask learners to count the syllables in selected words within a text.

- o Put a plastic overlay over the page. Ask the learner to circle all two-syllable words in one colour, three syllable words in another, etc.

- o This can also be done verbally by using some words that are of interest to the learner. For example; how many syllables in

Everton, Liverpool, Leeds, etc. Such activities can be extended by asking the learner to think of their own words with a set number of syllables in them.

- Activities that involve a number are also easy to convert to board games; instead of using a die, the number of syllables is used to move spaces on a board game. Likewise, try games such as “syllable snap” or “syllable bingo”.

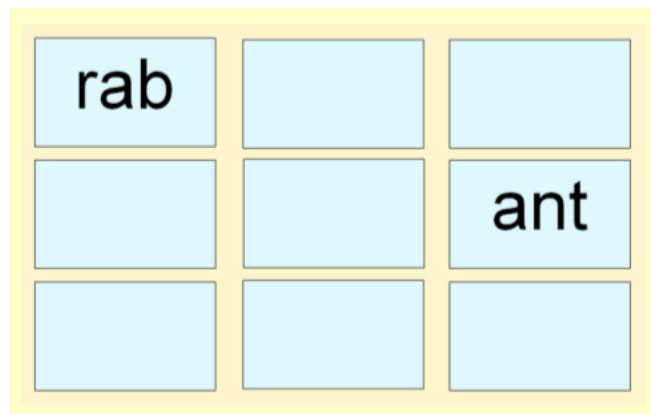


### Pairs

- Syllable “chunks” are arranged face-down in a grid pattern. Learners turn over two cards at a time to see if they can make a word from them. Learners must read aloud both syllables each time they turn them over.



- If the two syllables make a real word, the learner removes the cards from the grid and adds them to their “stash”. The learner with the most cards at the end of the game wins.
- This activity not only provides helpful syllable practice, but also works on working memory and (remembering where in the grid certain syllables are) and decoding of “nonsense words” (reading aloud two syllables which don’t match, for example “rab-ant” instead of “rab-bit”).



### Reinforcing a phonic pattern

- Word lists – focusing on patterns
- Tactile / kinaesthetic activities
- ICT
- Word building and non-words
- Games
- Wooden / plastic letters
- Dictation and using words in own sentences
- Strategies to teach and reinforce a phonic pattern
- Introduce the pattern through directed discovery, for example, within a text.
- Make a cue card.
- Write a list of words including this spelling and practice reading.
- Use a range of activities to provide lots of opportunities for over learning.
- Check spelling at word level.
- Check spelling at text level, this can be used as a form of informal assessment.

### Onset-rime segments

- The learner may recognise common rimes in a word (-in, -it, -an) so then they are able to attack the word in two parts, having divided visually into onset and rime (p-in, h-it, pl-an).

- The learner is encouraged to view the rime elements as chunks of sounds rather than individual letters and this can be an effective way of dealing with difficulties with blending individual sounds together.
- Such an approach can be reinforced by using a “chunks pack”.
- Onset and rime can be a very useful strategy with learners who find blending sounds into words problematic. The rime part of a word can be written on a piece of coloured card for the learner to practice (e.g.: -ip, -it, -in). By adding different consonants the learner can read a wide range of words.
- This approach also makes good use of analogy. This is an effective reading skill that often needs to be developed with the dyslexic learner as they often find it difficult to transfer learning. For example, they may be able to read “drink” but not “think”, because they have not identified that the rime part of these two words is the same.
- In addition it means that words are learned in rhyming groups, which is important as again this is an area that often needs developing with dyslexic learners.
- Once again the key to this strategy is practice, practice, practice, as the ultimate goal is for this to become automatic.

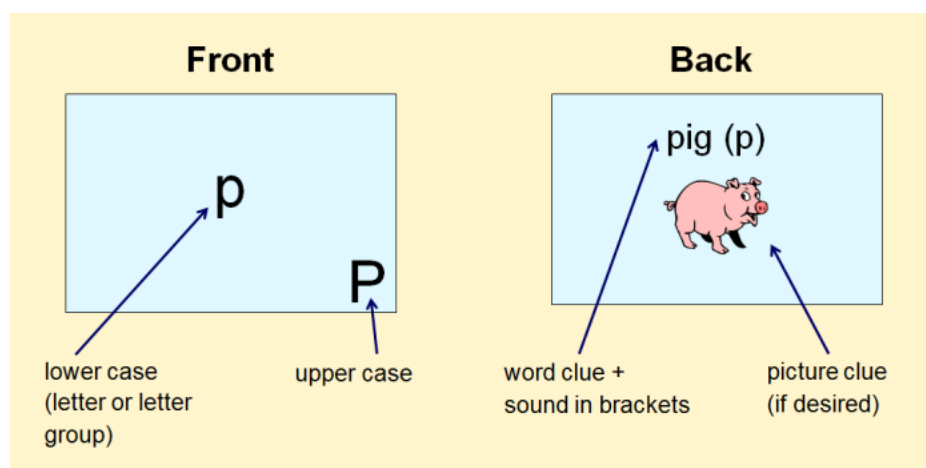
How many other words can be made using the rime –at ?

A diagram illustrating the concept of rime. On the left, a list of consonants is shown: F, Fl, Sp, C, B, H, and M. On the right, the rime 'at' is written. Green arrows point from each of these consonants to the 'at' rime, demonstrating how they can be combined to form different words.

A diagram illustrating the concept of rime. On the left, a list of characters is shown: R, followed by seven question marks (?). On the right, the rime 'ant' is written. Green arrows point from each of these characters to the 'ant' rime, suggesting that various consonants can be combined with 'ant' to form words.

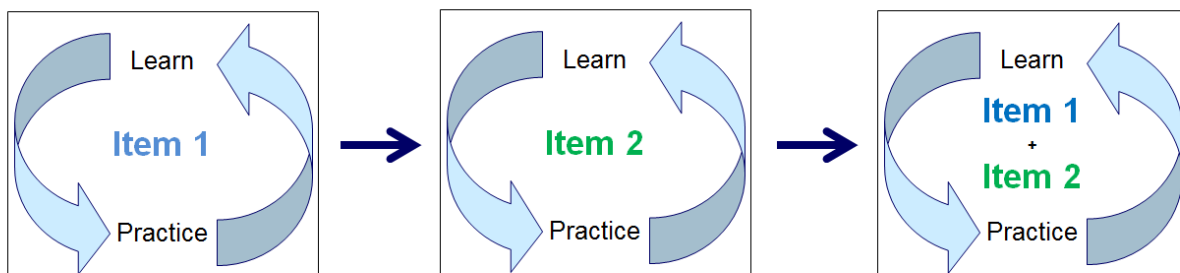
## Blending sounds into Words

- Using wooden or plastic letters and encouraging the learner to physically move them or crash them together.
- Tracing over each letter with a finger or pencil whilst sounding out. This encourages them to remember the sounds by adding a kinaesthetic link.
- Cursive handwriting can also be particularly helpful and the learner should be encouraged to write the word whilst making the corresponding sounds, the physical links between each letter using cursive style encourages the learner to prolong each sound in their mouth.
- Printed styles of writing can almost encourage the learner to view each letter in isolation, resulting in a staccato approach to sounding each letter out rather blending all of the letters in a word together.
- Grapheme – phoneme linkage
- For each new reading skill that is taught, a small card (about the size of a business card) is made to be used as an aide memoir.
  - o On the front of the card in the middle, the lower case letter or group of letters is written.
  - o On the front of the card In the bottom right hand corner, the upper case is written.
  - o On the back of the card at the top is a clue word and next to that the sound in brackets, e.g.: pig (p).
  - o The individual can also draw a picture of the clue word as a reminder.
- Reading Card Routine: the routine for using this type of reading card is as follows:
  - o Learner looks at the front of the card with the letter on.
  - o Without looking at the back of the card, the learner pronounces first the clue word associated with the letter/letter group and then the sound (e.g.: pig (p)).
  - o If the learner can't remember the sound then they can check the picture on the back of the card to remind themselves.



## Slow and steady

It cannot be stressed enough that these skills and strategies will need to be taught slowly, in patterns, in a multisensory way and with enough practice and repetition that they become mastered. In the case of the dyslexic learner, often their knowledge may be patchy and inconsistent. It should therefore not be assumed that, just because an individual can read some apparently complex words, that they actually have sufficient reading skills.



It is often the case that the greatest confusion lies at the most basic level and the teacher will often have to go right back to basics in order to resolve the fundamental reading problems that are in evidence. Many secondary age and adult dyslexic learners still do not have sound grapheme–phoneme links in place and this can often result in inaccuracy and confusion when reading.

To summarise, phonological skills may involve:

- Discrimination between sounds
- Segmenting into syllables or phonemes
- Rhyme recognition and production
- Sequencing of phonemes or syllables
- Onset-rime
- Alliteration
- Phoneme deletion (taking sounds away)
- Blending sounds together to read words

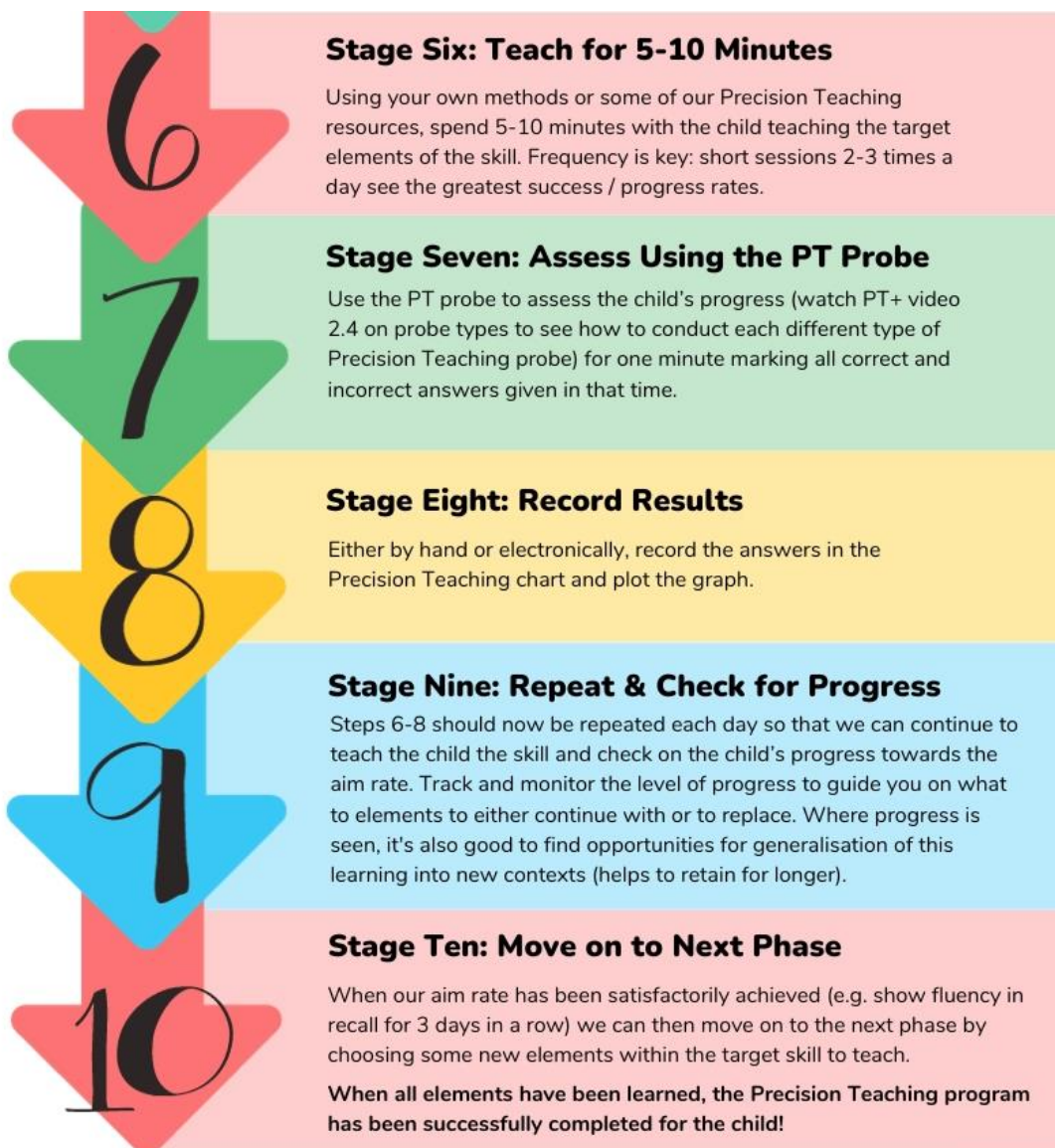
Some of these skills are covered in the suggestions above. They can also be practiced by making games, worksheets and memory/flash cards. Remember to use spoken presentation and/or pictures so pupils are really listening to the sounds and not working out the answers by looking at the words on the page.

# Specific Interventions

## Precision Teaching

Precision Teaching is an instructional approach that utilises direct and frequent measurement of a child's performance in a specific skill to chart and visualise the learner's progress and inform the teacher's instructional decisions (Kubina & Yurich, 2012). This provides highly specific learning targets which are then effectively memorised (i.e. stick in long-term memory) using a quick and engaging rote repetition approach. In practice this often means that, for learning a target (e.g. recognising 5 more sight words), a teacher, TA and/or parents engages with the child in Precision Teaching for 1 x 7-10 minutes a day.







## Paired Reading

Paired Reading was initially devised by Professor Keith Topping of Dundee University. Paired reading is a very effective, evidence-based method of helping children progress in their reading. It is like a child learning to ride a bike. In the early stages you give the child encouragement, confidence and control, by holding the bicycle. Your own instinct will tell you when to let go. So you can gradually disengage for longer periods until your child is able to ride without help. The same applies to Paired Reading. It is an ideal way of helping the child to become an independent reader. It works on building up the positives and successes rather than concentrating on mistakes.

It helps to:

- Develop a child's love for reading and books
- Encourage a child to read independently with confidence
- Build up trust between the reader and reading partner

Paired Reading works best for children who have already made a start with reading. For those in the first stages of developing literacy. It is also very effective with older struggling or reluctant readers. Every child will benefit from using Paired Reading. It is not just for children with learning difficulties.

Teachers often notice a marked difference in a child's reading fluency, confidence and enjoyment in reading. Children who have taken part in paired reading sessions comment on their developing enjoyment of reading and no longer dreading reading lessons.

Any type of text could be used from story books and comics to recipes and leaflets. The child should choose the text. The chosen text should have around four new words to a page – enough to enable progress but not so many to make the child feel overwhelmed.

Paired Reading should be carried out as often as possible but at least three times a week for 15 to 20 minutes. The time can be adjusted according to the child's needs and abilities.

Full 'how to' information can be found at: <https://highlandliteracy.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/leaflet-paired-reading-1.pdf>

# Cued Spelling

Cued Spelling is an intervention programme for pupils who are struggling with spelling words.

It is a small group intervention where pupils work with a teacher and other pupils to learn their spellings.

In each session, pupils learn to use different 'cues' which are ways to remember spellings that are tricky. For example, they might choose to remember the spelling of 'said' as a phrase like "Sally Anne Is Dancing". There are lots of 'cues' they can choose to use.

Different kinds of cues:

- **RULES** - some spellings do follow logical rules (like "i before e, except after c" - which most people remember). The learner may be helped by rules like this, but (a) make sure you've got them right, and (b) keep them simple and few in number.
- **WORD IN WORDS** - just breaking words up into bits like syllables helps us to remember them, but if you can break them up into smaller words that mean something, it's even easier to remember them. Words like shep/herd, care/taker and water/fall are like this.
- **FRONTS AND BACKS** - quite a lot of words have the same sort of start or finish. Starts and finishes can be looked at closely in a set of words that start or finish the same. Starts (like "sta-", "pre-", "un-") are often not as hard as finishes (like "-tion", "-ate", "-ous", "-ght").
- **FAMILIES** - words which have the same fronts and backs can be put in groups or families. Sorting out the words into families can be a game, perhaps even with a little prize for the winner. You can do this with words that have the same middles, too. You might think of other ways of sorting words into families or categories.
- **MAKE A PICTURE** - if you can make up a picture in your mind about a word, this will help you remember it. (Like thinking up a picture of two people getting married (wed) on a Wednesday to remind you how to spell the name of that day). Some of your mind pictures or "visual images" will seem really silly - but this is good, because if they are funny you will remember them better.
- **RELATIONS** - two words that look different can still sometimes be related (or "associated") in some way. If you can relate a word you don't know to one you do know, you then might remember them together - right! Like: "b icy cle" - "fridge". But the learner must be able to remember the second word (e.g. fridge) easily. It is usually easier to remember there is a link between words than remembering there is not a link or relationship between words.
- **SHRINK AND GROW** - with some words, you can remember a short hard bit of it or just some initials for each part, like "par" in "separate". Often it helps to "grow" the initials into new words, to give you a saying or rhyme to remember. Like: b / e / a / u / tiful = big elephants aren't ugly. Another example: n e c e s s ary - has 1 collar & 2 socks.



- **FIX & STRETCH MEANING** - it helps if we really understand what those hard words mean. The learner might choose them because they seem interesting, but talking about the full and exact meaning and use for while will make the word even more interesting, and help fix it in the learner's mind.
- **FUNNIES** - as much as you can, work jokes and other silly and comic things into what you do with Cued Spelling. Funny things are much more likely to be remembered.
- **RHYME AND RHYTHM** - rhyme is very good for helping you remember, like in "i before e except after c". If finding a rhyme is too hard, try to get some rhythm into the mnemonic so it is easier to say. You could even try singing some of the words!
- **HIGHLIGHT** - we only usually get one bit of a hard word wrong. Try highlighting the hard bits with colours (perhaps green for easy bits, red for hard bits). Or just use capital letters or underline:- e.g. stationery

There are many more interventions available, many of which do not require expensive resources or lengthy training for staff. The educational psychology service, as well as the specialist teaching teams provided by Southwark, can advise further.