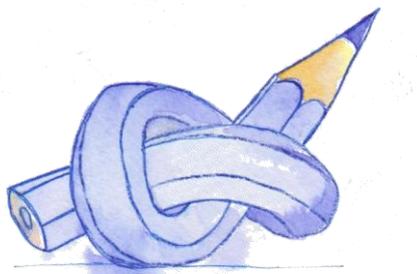


Lockdown Learning

by Charmaine McKissock

Author and Dyslexia specialist Charmaine McKissock has created a helpful guide for parents and carers to support learning during Lockdown. Struggling with dyslexia can feel frustrating, upsetting and tiring for everybody. The emotional and practical challenges of the Covid 19 situation have added another layer of upset to the learning experience. Charmaine explores the challenges, skills and huge benefits of helping dyslexic learners at home.



Is my learner falling behind at home?

Learners don't need to fall behind while they're away from formal school – quite the opposite. Some calm, concentrated and careful one-to-one learning time with a trusted helper can have a real positive impact on their progress. You can help your learner regain confidence; overcome challenges that had been holding them back; and develop new transferrable skills. There is so much to say about those three simple words 'calm', 'concentrated' and 'careful': it's not possible to fully develop all these ideas in one short article, but I will give you a flavour of what I mean. You can find more practical help and guidance in 'Helping Kids with Wobbly Spelling'.

Are you worried about helping your learners?

When I train parents and other helpers to give their dyslexic learners extra tutoring at home, I start by empowering them to develop their own confidence as well as practical skills.

For example, do you feel there aren't enough hours in the day to follow a learning routine with your learner? Well, if you follow the 'Pick & Stick' spelling method carefully, only a few minutes practice each day are needed. This is because doing 'little but often' is one of the key ingredients of the method.

The method also involves you getting to know the exact nature of your learner's strengths and weaknesses, and you are obviously best placed to do that. This intimate approach works best in a one-to-one situation. The programme is tailor-made for each individual, although the basic approach is the same for all learners.

And what's more, if you overcome a spelling block together, this can spill over into other areas such as reading or grammar, through a snowballing effect.

At the start of using the 'Pick and Stick' programme, the learner works in close partnership with their helper. Gradually, you'll notice your learner becoming more independent, at a speed that's right for them. In the next phase, you may notice a snowball effect, as the learner

becomes more adventurous, resourceful and competent. They then become more independent in finding solutions to some very stubborn challenges.

Each programme is tailored to fit the needs and interests, abilities of an individual learner, so the bonus is that there are fewer behavioural issues to address. You will find some information about the 'Pick & Stick' method at the end of this article.

Do you need any special skills to teach at home?

Let me reassure you that you just need to:

- be open-minded and willing to take a fresh approach to learning (maybe very different from their own);
- have a sense of fun and adventure when guiding your learner;
- have patience and sticking power to keep your learner on track;
- have good understanding of guiding principles (see the Pick and Stick method below);
- have a selection of recommended but simple strategies at your fingertips, so you can be positive and confident about them with your learner;
- be flexible: you'll find many practical ideas and worksheets to use. I'm absolutely sure you'll want to tweak them to suit your particular learner and situation

How does the Pick & Stick method work?

There are seven main ingredients that make the method work so well.



1. **The Pick & Stick (P&S) method is multi-sensory: it uses sound, images, colour, touch, as well as movement.**

This really fixes spellings in your memory, as they are stored in different parts of the brain. Learners find out about their brains and how to boost learning power.

2. **P&S trains the learner to develop curiosity and calm concentration.**

Learners find out how to pinpoint exactly what they find difficult, as they focus only on the 'problem' part of the word. They also learn methods to calm themselves down.

3. **The learner finds an imaginative personal solution to the target word.**

Learners (supported by the helper) learn to use their own experiences and knowledge as an anchor for learning a new word.

4. **The learner is never overloaded.**

They don't go onto learn anything new until previous learning is solid. Learnt words are stored in a personal 'bank' of words. The bank of words will grow slowly at first and then faster and

faster, as the method rolls out.

5. **The learner takes an active part in the programme and becomes progressively more independent.**

Your learner chooses the words that are important to them and one of the seven memory strategies that work best for them.

6. **The learner practises at specific times and dates – for about 15 minutes several times a week.** This routine reinforces and stores memories as effectively as possible.

7. **Most importantly, Pick & Stick is fun and works.**

This reduces emotional upsets and behavioural issues. This also boosts self-esteem, motivation and confidence in learning.

Keep safe, be confident and get creative in teaching your learners at home!

About the author

Charmaine McKissock has helped many individuals find ways to learn more easily and succeed in their goals. She has contributed widely to the understanding of dyslexia and other learning differences. She has worked in Education, Health and Community settings as a Senior Lecturer, trainer and manager. A past winner of the Observer's Young Writer's Competition, Charmaine has been commissioned to write and illustrate numerous publications for educational and community projects. She is the author of the innovative and highly popular 'Great Ways to Learn Anatomy & Physiology' published by Palgrave Macmillan and 'Helping Kids with Wobbly Spelling'. Visit her website www.wobblylearning.co.uk

