



# What is dyslexia?

**This short guide explains what dyslexia is, the difficulties people experience and the things that can help**

## What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a language-based learning difference. It mainly affects how a person processes the sounds in words - this ability is called phonological awareness.

For example, a person with dyslexia has difficulty:

- knowing that the word 'cat' has three sounds: c-a-t
- being able to say what word you get if you take the 's' off of 'stop' (you get 'top')
- rhyming words like 'cow' and 'now'
- understanding the difference between similar sounding words, like 'have' and 'half'
- blending sounds together to make words.

Phonological awareness is a key building block for learning to read and spell.

### **Someone with dyslexia can also have difficulties with:**

- Working memory - for example, remembering a set of instructions or holding a phone number in your mind long enough to dial it
- Processing speed - taking longer to name familiar things like colours, letters, or numbers (sometimes called 'rapid naming').

## What challenges are related to dyslexia?

Difficulties with phonological awareness, memory and processing speed can make reading, writing, spelling skills harder. They can also affect everyday tasks at school, work and home, such as organisational skills.

## What can help?

- **Early identification** – being identified and having the right support early on in life leads to better attainment in school, greater confidence and more positive mental health.
- **Inclusive learning and work environments** that allow people to have effective adjustments for their individual needs, for example, in exams or at work.
- **Skills in self-advocacy**, to ask for the support that works best for them in any situation.

## Everyone is unique

Everyone with dyslexia is different and has different strengths, difficulties and strategies that work for them. It is important that the individual develops their unique skills and interests, which can help manage some of their difficulties.

## More dyslexia facts

- Around 1 in 10 people in Scotland are dyslexic.
- Dyslexia exists in all cultures.
- Dyslexia often runs in the family – it's genetic.
- It often co-occurs with other conditions, for example ADHD or dyscalculia.
- It's not related intelligence.
- Dyslexia can be classed as a disability under the Equality Act (2010).

## Further information and help

### Dyslexia Scotland

- Dyslexia Scotland runs a free and confidential **Helpline** that can answer your questions about dyslexia. Anyone can contact the Helpline. Phone **0344 800 8484** or email **helpline@dyslexiascotland.org.uk** (Open Monday to Thursday 10am to 4.30pm, Friday 10am to 4pm).
- Dyslexia Scotland works with a wide range of people such as teachers, employers and families to raise awareness about dyslexia and signpost them to the right support and information.

## The Scottish Working Definition of Dyslexia

There is an official Scottish Working Definition of dyslexia; this has recently been reviewed against a new international definition agreed by experts.

### Scotland's Working Definition of Dyslexia

[dyslexiascotland.org.uk/what-is-dyslexia](https://dyslexiascotland.org.uk/what-is-dyslexia)

