Fact Sheet for Anyone Teaching Students with Dyslexia

UNE
Student Academic Success
Center - Biddeford

What is Dyslexia?

- Dyslexia is a linguistic dysfunction, not a deficit in thinking skills or intelligence (39).

- Dyslexia is not an overall deficit in language, but a localized weakness within a specific component of the language system: the **phonologic module** (40).

- The phonologic module is the functional part of the brain that *automatically*, *rapidly*, and *effortlessly* assembles phonemes into words for the speaker and disassembles the spoken work into the underlying phonemes for the listener (40, 45).

- Reading is more difficult than speaking (for all of us) (49). There is no **reading module** hard-wired into human brains.

- Dysfunction in certain areas of dyslexic readers' brains prevents the rapid, automatic word recognition that makes quick, fluent reading possible (80).

- Dyslexic readers use compensatory reading systems that activate other parts of the brain which are much slower in processing words and prone to mistakes (80).

- Reading problems associated with dyslexia are persistent; they don't go away (79).

- Learn about the strengths of dyslexic students on the next page and at https://dyslexiahelp.umich.edu/dyslexics/learn-about-dyslexia/what-is-dyslexia/the-many-strengths-of-dyslexics.

What It is Like Being a Dyslexic College Student?

- For dyslexic readers, reading takes much longer and requires much greater effort than for neurotypical readers (439).

- Dyslexic writers often have very slow composition rates due to overloaded working memory, making writing a grueling hard-to-sustain process (Herbert 850).

- Dyslexia can be associated with stigmatizing writing issues, such as wrong word and spelling errors, disorganization, and underdeveloped ideas (Herbert 843).

How Can Instructors of Dyslexic College Students Help?

- Give dyslexic students extra time for reading and writing. Dyslexia creates a *physiological* need for extra time for reading, writing, and oral responses to reading. Extra time is necessary if the dyslexic reader's comprehension, knowledge, intelligence, and skill (and not their disability) is to be measured by an assessment (439).

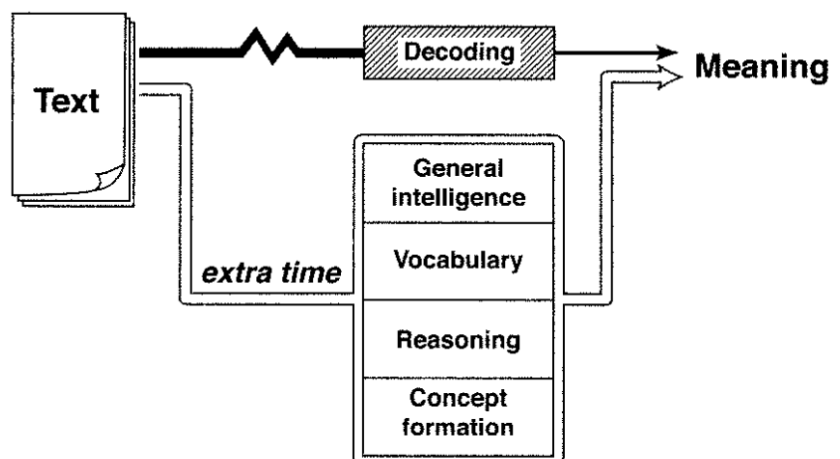- Choose readings and books available in digital form (447).

Figure 49. Using Context Takes Time

- Ensure that any written material that you use in class can be read aloud by a computer. This includes prompts, study guides, slide-decks, as well as readings. Most pdfs are not machine readable (448).

- Dyslexic readers may need to talk through the material with you or a tutor on a one-on-one basis (449).

- Allow dyslexic students to prepare oral reports rather than requiring instant oral responses in class (453).

- Interpret phonological slips (*It's not the heat; it's the humanity* [for *humidity*]) as phonological slips, not as a lack of knowledge. Phonological slips are a result of confusing the sounds of language, so they should not be mistakenly interpreted as lack of knowledge (55, 453).

- Written work should be graded on content rather than on form, especially spelling (453-54).

Resources for Students with Dyslexia and Their Instructors

- **SensusAcess** (free) – converts documents into alternative media, including audiobooks (MP3 and DAISY), ebooks (EPUB, EPUB3, and Mobi), and digital Braille.

- **OnlineOCR.net** (free) – converts PDFs and other documents to machine-readable formats; free account required for multi-page files.

- <u>Bookshare</u> – People with dyslexia, blindness, cerebral palsy, and other reading barriers can customize their experience to suit their learning style and find virtually any book they need for school, work, or the joy of reading.

- **Learning Ally** – human-narrated audio textbooks and literature.

- **Immersive Reader** (often built into Microsoft applications such as Word Online, OneNote Online, Teams, and the Edge browser).

- **Immersive Reader Extension for Chrome**

- **Co:Writer** – Co:Writer helps give you the words and phrases you're intending as you type—even if your grammar and spelling are way off. Just type a letter or two and Co:Writer predicts words and phrases in real time. Companion to Snap&Read.

- **Snap&Read** – Snap&Read is a powerful suite of tools to help with reading challenges. It includes a text-to-speech tool, a snapshot tool to turn inaccessible text on the web to machine-readable text, an annotation tool, a pdf-conversion tool that makes them machine-readable, a capture tool, and a translation tool. Companion to Co:Writer.

- **Read Aloud**: A Text-to-Speech Voice Reader (Chrome Extension).

- **Natural Reader** (free) – reads machine-readable texts in a pretty natural-sounding voice.

Embracing Cognitive Diversity
The Hidden Strengths of **DYSLEXIA**
AT A GLANCE
Dr. Megan Anna Neff

Creative Thinking
Dyslexics often excel in thinking outside the box & coming up with innovative solutions due to their unique thought processes.

3 Dimensional + Visual Thinking
Dyslexics often have strong visual-spatial skills, including 3-dimensional thinking, which can be beneficial in fields like art, design, & architecture

Empathy
Many dyslexics possess strong interpersonal skills & empathy, as they often need to navigate challenges in communication and understanding

Strong Memory Skills
Many people with dyslexia have excellent long-term memory, particularly when it comes to experiences & visual information

Narrative Reasoning
Dyslexics excel in narrative reasoning, leveraging memory for efficient learning, while showcasing strong reasoning skills in simplification, analysis, decision-making, & strategic visioning

Neurodivergent insights
Dr. Neff