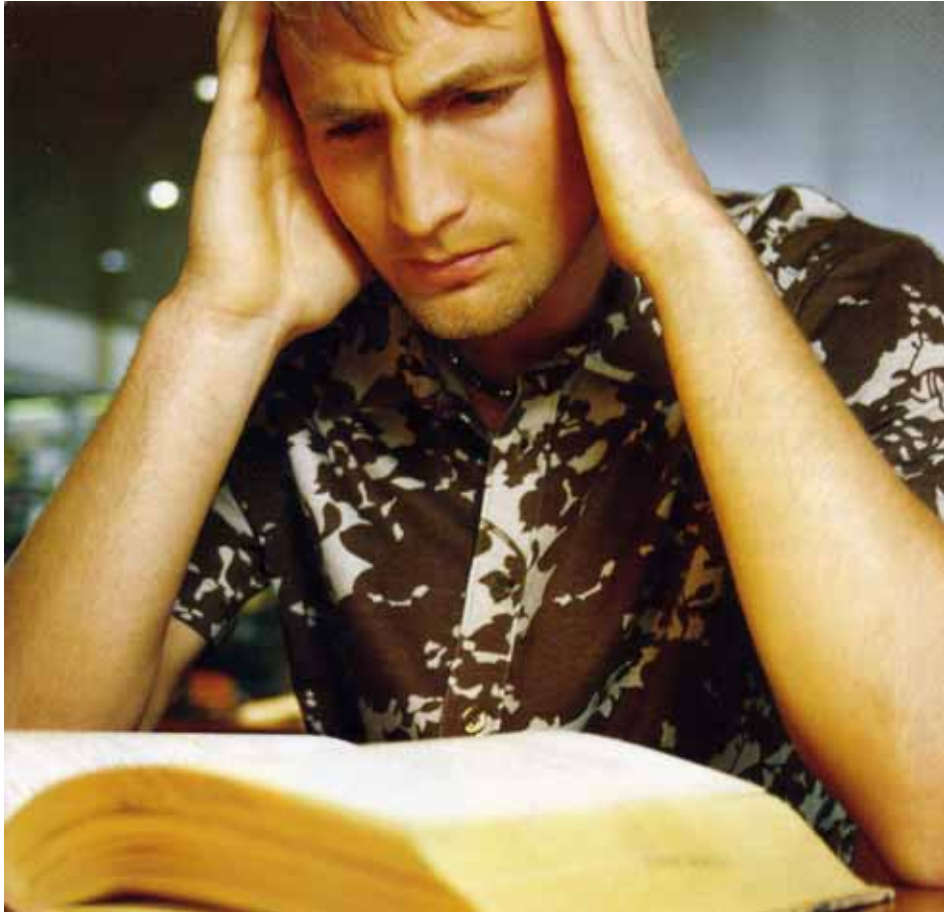


Dyslexia at Work



www.axa-unite.org

What is Dyslexia?

The word 'dyslexia' comes from the Greek and means 'difficulty with words'.

Dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty that mainly affects reading and spelling. Dyslexia is characterised by difficulties in processing word-sounds and by weaknesses in short-term verbal memory; its effects may be seen in spoken language as well as written language. The current evidence suggests that these difficulties arise from inefficiencies in language-processing areas in the left hemisphere of the brain which, in turn, appear to be linked to genetic differences.

Dyslexia is life-long, but its effects can be minimised by targeted literacy intervention, technological support and adaptations to ways of working and learning. Dyslexia is not related to intelligence, race or social background. Dyslexia varies in severity and often occurs alongside other specific learning difficulties, such as Dyspraxia or Attention Deficit Disorder, resulting in variation in the degree and nature of individuals' strengths and weaknesses.

Possible difficulties.

- Reading hesitantly.
- Misreading, making understanding difficult.
- Difficulty with sequences, e.g. getting dates in order.
- Poor organisation or time management.
- Difficulty organising thoughts clearly.
- Erratic spelling.

Possible strengths.

- Innovative thinkers.
- Excellent trouble shooters.
- Intuitive problem solving.
- Creative in many different ways.
- Lateral thinkers.

Adult Dyslexia Checklist

Read the questions carefully and be as honest as you can when answering them. Please tick **Yes** or **No** to each question. Don't miss any questions out. If in doubt tick the answer that you feel is true most often.

| | Yes | No |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 Do you find difficulty telling left from right? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 Is map reading or finding your way to a strange place confusing? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 Do you dislike reading aloud? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 Do you take longer than you should to read a page of a book? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 Do you find it difficult to remember the sense of what you have read? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6 Do you dislike reading long books? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7 Is your spelling poor? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8 Is your writing difficult to read? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9 Do you get confused if you have to speak in public? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10 Do you find it difficult to take messages on the telephone and pass them on correctly? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11 When you say a long word, do you sometimes find it difficult to get all the sounds in the right order? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12 Do you find it difficult to do sums in your head without using your fingers or paper? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13 When using the telephone, do you tend to get the numbers mixed up when you dial? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14 Do you find it difficult to say the months of the year forwards in a fluent manner? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15 Do you find it difficult to say the months of the year backwards? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16 Do you mix up dates and times and miss appointments? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 17 When writing cheques do you frequently find yourself making mistakes? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 18 Do you find forms difficult and confusing? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 19 Do you mix up bus numbers like 95 and 59? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 20 Did you find it hard to learn multiplication tables at school? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

The 12 strongest indicators in order of importance are:

| Order | Item |
|-------|------|
| 1. | Q17 |
| 2. | Q13 |
| 3. | Q7 |
| 4. | Q16 |
| 5. | Q18 |
| 6. | Q10 |
| 7. | Q19 |
| 8. | Q14 |
| 9. | Q20 |
| 10. | Q4 |
| 11. | Q1 |
| 12. | Q11 |

If the majority of these items are ticked, this is a strong indication of dyslexia.

Nine or more YES responses on the questionnaire, as a whole is a powerful indicator of a difficulty. The items ticked should be compared with the 'best twelve' shown above.

What do I do next?

You may find it helpful to undertake a fuller assessment. A specialist assessment can help you to access support, whether you are in full-time education or employment.

If you do the checklist and the answer is not what you expect, talk to someone who knows about dyslexia. We are all very different and you may require something more focussed than a checklist to identify your dyslexia. You can speak to your doctor or contact one of the following:

The British Dyslexia Association, Tel: **0118 966 8271**
The address of their website is **www.bdadyslexia.org.uk**

The Adult Dyslexia Organisation, Tel: **0207 924 9559**
Email: **dyslexia.hq@dial.pipex.com**

Help in the workplace

(Disability Discrimination Act 1995)

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) prohibits discrimination against disabled people in employment. Employers must make reasonable adjustment to their premises or employment arrangements, if these substantially disadvantage a disabled employee, or prospective employee, compared to a non-disabled person.

An employer must not refuse to employ someone simply because they have a disability. They also have a duty to think about different ways of working.

Employers must not discriminate against a disabled person in

- the recruitment and retention of employees,
- promotion and transfers,
- training and development,
- the dismissal process.

Severe dyslexia is covered under the law.

The DDA defines a disabled person as someone with "a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities."

Dyslexia does not always affect a person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities. Dyslexic people can often reduce the effect of their disability if they are able to do things their way. However, if they cannot do this for any reason the effects can be disabling. When the Bill was being debated in parliament, the government made it clear that they thought severe dyslexia was covered under this law.

"In some cases, people have 'coping strategies' which cease to work in certain circumstances (for example, where someone who stutters or has dyslexia is placed under stress). If it is possible that a person's ability to manage the effects of the impairment will break down so that these effects will sometimes occur, this possibility must be taken into account when assessing the effects of the impairment. "

[Paragraph A8, Guidance to the Definitions of Disability]

Enforcement of the Act

If a person with a disability feels they have been discriminated against they may want to take their case to an Employment Tribunal. If they win the case, they may be able to claim for financial loss and damages for injuries to feelings. The Tribunal may instruct the employer to make a reasonable adjustment to enable the dyslexic person to work.

Reasonable adjustments in the workplace

Adjustments for dyslexic people can be simple and inexpensive. They may also be a benefit to other employees. A willingness to be flexible is the most important thing.

For adjustments to be made, the employee needs to disclose details of their difficulties. Dyslexic people will want their employer to understand their dyslexia so they can feel confident about discussing any difficulties that arise.

Examples of Reasonable Adjustments

Specialist advice is essential to determine the most appropriate adjustments for a particular individual. Here are some examples of adjustments that have proved successful:

Written Communication.

General difficulty with reading:

- Give verbal rather than written instructions.
- Highlight salient points in documents.
- Use voice mail as opposed to written memos.
- Use screen reading software.
- Supply screen reading software and scanner.
- A Reading Pen may be useful for unfamiliar words.
- Provide information on coloured paper (find out which colour helps the person to read best).
- Set up a computer screen with a coloured background to documents.

Difficulty with reading and writing:

- Allow plenty of time to read and complete the task.
- Examine other ways of giving the same information to avoid reading.
- Discuss the material with the employee, giving summaries and/or key points.
- Utilise information prepared in other formats for example audio or videotape, drawings, diagrams and flowcharts.
- Use mind-mapping software, such as Inspirations, Mind Genius.
- Use digital recorders.
- Use speech to text software.

Spelling and grammar errors:

- Offer assistive text software such as ClaroRead or TextHelp.
- Proof read work.
- Instant spell checker on all computers.
- Offer assistive text software on all applications, where possible.

Working at a computer.

- Change background colour of screen to suit individual preference.
- Supply anti-glare screen filter.
- Allow frequent breaks, at least every hour.
- Alternate computer work with other tasks where possible.
- Avoid continuous all day computer work.

Verbal Communication.

Difficulty remembering and following verbal instructions:

- Give instructions one at a time.
- Communicate instructions slowly and clearly in a quiet location.
- Write down important information.
- Demonstrate and supervise tasks and projects.
- Encourage the person to take notes and then check them.
- Ask instructions to be repeated back, to confirm that the instruction has been understood correctly.
- Use a digital recorder to record important instructions.
- Back up multiple instructions in writing or with diagrams.

Difficulty with hidden meanings in conversation:

- Give clear concise and direct instructions; do not hint or make assumptions that you have been understood.

Time and Work Planning.

Concentration difficulties/distractions:

- Make sure the workplace is quiet and away from distractions for example away from doors, busy phones, loud machinery.
- Allocate a private workspace if possible.
- Where feasible allow an employee to work from home occasionally.
- Provide a quiet working environment for a dyslexic employee by allocating libraries, file rooms, private offices and other enclosed areas when others are not using them.

Coping with interruptions:

- Use a “do not disturb” sign when specific tasks require intense concentration.
- Encourage co-workers not to disturb the person unless absolutely necessary.
- When interrupting, allow the person to pause and write down what they are doing to refer to when resuming work.
- Ensure that each task is completed before starting another.
- Encourage outgoing rather than incoming calls. Offer training in how to use the telephone effectively for example jotting down key points before making the call.

Remembering appointments and deadlines:

- Remind the person of important deadlines and review priorities regularly.
- Hang a wall planner that visually highlights daily/monthly appointments, deadlines, tasks and projects.
- Supply a PDA personal digital organiser.
- Supply an alarm watch.
- Encourage the employee to use the daily calendar and alarm features on his/her computer.

Organisation of property:

- Ensure that work areas are organised, neat and tidy.
- Keep items where they can be clearly seen for example shelves and bulletin boards.
- Ensure the team returns important items to the same place each time.
- Colour code items.
- Ensure work areas are well lit.

Organising workflow:

- Supply and use a wall planner.
- Prioritise important tasks.
- Create a daily, dated "To Do" list.
- Use diaries.
- Write a layout for regular tasks with appropriate prompts for example for meetings or taking notes.
- Allow extra time for unforeseen occurrences.
- Build planning time into each day.

Short term memory problems especially names, numbers and lists:

- Use mnemonic devices and acronyms.
- Organise details on paper so that they can be referred to easily using diagrams and flowcharts.
- Check back understanding.
- Use multi-sensory learning techniques such as reading material onto a tape machine and then playing it back whilst re-reading.
- Use computer software; sometimes well developed programme menus and help features are useful.
- Use a calculator.



What about Performance Management?

Within **AXA** there is a strong focus on individual performance management and this directly impacts on the pay and bonuses that employees receive. Performance Management includes a variety of measures for speed and accuracy and in some areas there is an overriding emphasis on the quality auditing of work. This could have a significant impact on the pay and career progression of an employee that has Dyslexia, particularly if no reasonable adjustments have been made to take this into account.

It is important for anyone that suspects they may be Dyslexic (have you taken the test on page 3?) should look into whether they should have a full Dyslexia assessment.

Any employee that knows they are Dyslexic should discuss this with their manager, who can refer to HR and Occupational Health for any necessary guidance.

It should be remembered that although Dyslexic employees may have difficulties in some areas, they may have strengths in others such as being innovative thinkers, excellent trouble shooters, intuitive problem solvers or being creative in many different ways.

Dyslexic people have had to contend with their weaknesses all their life and are usually particularly determined and hardworking. Underperformance will rarely be a result of poor attitude or laziness.

Dyslexic people may take a longer time to master new tasks, but once mastered they are well and truly learnt.

Dyslexia should not be a barrier to promotion, gaining qualifications or career development.

If a Dyslexic employee is taking an exam it may be possible to allow them extra time or to provide the questions in an alternative format.

If a Dyslexic employee is facing an interview, training course or assessment they should make the organiser aware of their Dyslexia so their needs can be met at the outset.

Could a member of my team be Dyslexic?

When reviewing the performance and development of employees managers should consider whether any performance issues could be due to Dyslexia. Unite believe all staff involved in induction and training should have received Dyslexia awareness training.

Where an individual trainee performs poorly, undiagnosed or undisclosed Dyslexic difficulties should be considered.

Could my child be Dyslexic?

If a child has several of these indications, further investigation should be made. The child may be dyslexic, or there may be other reasons. This is not a checklist.

Some of the factors that indicate Dyslexia will become apparent at different ages. However, there are many persisting factors in dyslexia, which can appear from an early age. They will still be noticeable when the dyslexic child leaves school.

These include:

- Obvious 'good' and 'bad' days, for no apparent reason,
- Confusion between directional words, e.g. up/down, in/out,
- Difficulty with sequence, e.g. coloured bead sequence, later with days of the week or numbers,
- A family history of dyslexia/reading difficulties.

You will need to talk to your child's school about providing suitable help and support. The school may have a good understanding of dyslexia and adequate funding.

If you have concerns you should make an appointment to see the school Special Educational Needs Coordinator.

You can pay for a private assessment by an educational psychologist or request that an educational psychologist at the Local Education Authority (LEA) does a formal assessment.

Organisations that provide help and advice

You can contact your local Unite representative if you need assistance at work. A list of these is on our website www.axa-unite.org

Your local Dyslexia Association – there is a list of these on this website www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/ldas.html

You can speak to your Doctor, who can refer you to a Dyslexia specialist and may also be able to treat you for stress or other associated issues.

The British Dyslexia Association, Tel: **0118 966 8271**
The address of their website is www.bdadyslexia.org.uk

Dyslexia Action is a national charity and the UK's leading provider of services and support for people with dyslexia and literacy difficulties.
www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk

The Adult Dyslexia Organisation, Tel: **0207 924 9559**
Email: dyslexia.hq@dial.pipex.com

The Disability Law Service provides free legal advice to disabled people and representation where appropriate.
Tel: **020 7791 9800**
Fax: **020 7791 9802**
Email: advice@dls.org.uk

RADAR is able to give advice on the Disability Discrimination Act
Tel: **020 7250 3222** Fax: **020 7250 0212**
Email: radar@radar.org.uk
Web: www.radar.org.uk

Employers Forum on Disability.
Tel: **020 7403 3020** Fax: **020 7403 0404**
Email: efd@employers-forum.co.uk
Web: www.employers-forum.co.uk