

# Understanding dyslexia



## Driver Youth Trust defines literacy difficulties as:

**“persistent difficulty in reading, writing, speaking and/or listening that may not be responsive to standard education approaches and requires further intervention”.**

Many learners may have literacy difficulties but no diagnosis – either because of lack of evidence, or because their difficulties don’t fit the criteria for any specific literacy difficulty diagnoses.

The key to identifying whether a learner has a literacy difficulty rather than a gap in their literacy knowledge is whether their struggles remain despite targeted intervention.



## Identifying dyslexia

“Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in correct and fluent word reading and spelling.

- The characteristics of dyslexia are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed.
- Dyslexia occurs across the range of intellectual abilities.
- It is best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, and there are no clear cut-off points.”

*Sir Jim Rose, The Rose Review, 2009*



# The 3 key areas of dyslexia and how to support them



## Verbal memory

Verbal memory is the understanding and processing of verbal information from other people, and ordering and recalling information when it's your turn to speak.

### Support strategies:

- Support verbal instructions with visuals or written guidance.
- Give verbal instructions one at a time to avoid confusion.
- Create 'hooks' for information.
- Reduce surrounding noise in the classroom to help the learner concentrate.
- When introducing new vocabulary, draw attention to the root word and any prefixes and suffixes.



## Speed of processing

Speed of processing is how long it takes for new information to be understood.

### Support strategies:

- Reframe daydreaming as 'thinking time'.
- Allocate plenty of thinking time throughout the lesson, and especially after introducing new content.
- Summarise key information and support verbal content with written notes.
- Measure how much learners are able to record by marking on their scripts after 10 minute intervals.



## Phonological awareness

Phonological awareness is the understanding and manipulation of words based on their sounds.

### Support strategies:

- Revisit phonemes with the learner regularly; often the curriculum does not give learners with dyslexia enough time to properly grasp them.
- Avoid or reconsider how you support activities like word searches.
- Sound out unfamiliar words with the learner.
- Remind them to use syllables and recognise 'parts' of the word to support spelling.

## The key takeaway

The key to supporting dyslexia is scaffolding some of what the learner finds difficult so that they can take in the important content. This doesn't mean simplifying your lessons, but ensuring that key elements are explored in detail and stored in the long-term memory.