

Dyslexia

Symptoms that interfere with learning:

reading, memorization and spelling difficulties, mispronouncing names or words or problems retrieving words, completing work on time, feelings of inferiority, anxiety and stress

Common Barriers

- Students with dyslexia found that, difficulties with spelling, reading comprehension, memory, and concentration were the most persistent challenges during their education
- Some students also reported knowing what they wanted to say but being unable to access the correct words to write or speak in a timely manner

Strategies

READING

Develop and use different reading techniques, such as:

- Read out loud
- Select and group the main ideas (get the big picture)
 - First find the topic: is your piece written about a person, thing, or idea (see title)?
 - Then find the main ideas: what is being said about the topic? Find the point of each paragraph, usually in one sentence, often the first sentence of the paragraph and sometimes the last sentence of the paragraph
 - Describe what you are reading in your own words (clarify)
 - Ask “why, how, and what-if” questions (i.e., why was it important to include this information?, how does the information relate to the big picture?, how does the information connect with your own experiences?, what would change if this information was missing?)
- Mentally visualize the content of the text
 - Create mental images or movies of what you are reading about
 - Use graphs, charts, and videos
- Take notes in a way that is most accessible for you:
 - Using color can help you categorize your information
 - Drawing mind maps or concept maps can help you visualize what you are learning, there are apps available to help you draw a mind map as well

TECHNOLOGY

- Gain insight in how technology can work for you, have you tried using...
 - Voice recording apps for note-taking? (i.e., Microsoft Word includes the “Dictate” option, MAC offers something similar in the keyboard menu)
 - Apps for concept maps?
 - Grammar correction and spell-check (i.e. Grammarly offers a free option to correct grammar and spelling)
 - Literacy support offering text to speech options. [UND Accessibility Technologies](#) provides [Read & Write](#) which can be downloaded at no cost
 - Using [UND tutoring services](#)

ORGANIZATION

- Organize or join a study group with students at or slightly above your performance level to hold each other accountable and to gain clarification on key terms, concepts, ideas etc. It helps you establish that you know what you are supposed to know and creates greater confidence.
- Create study guides on your own or with classmates to help study for tests/exams in your courses

HELPFUL RESOURCES

- Colleges have a selection of resources available to all student at no additional cost, examples are academic advisors, academic coaches, disability services, counseling, writing consultants, tutors, teaching assistants and your instructor is a great resource as well. They all welcome your questions and are dedicated to your success

Common Barriers

- Students with dyslexia have difficulties with spending long periods of time completing tasks that involve reading or writing as well as learning a foreign language

Strategies

GOAL SETTING

- Write down SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timed) goals and make sure your planned activities align with your main goals, such as college, work, close relationships, but also your physical and mental health

TIME MANAGEMENT

- Use digital planners with repeat and reminder function, and sync with a phone app – this provides a daily structure and prevents overwhelm from the complexity college offers. It helps you to focus on what needs to happen in the present moment:
 - Organize time by the hour instead of a to-do list, with space for breaks, rest, exercise, social time, and meals (follow the schedule from your instructor/syllabus)
 - Plan for flexibility by allowing free time for fun things to do, spending time with your family and/or friends, and relaxation activities – this will help you keep the planner attractive
 - Avoid getting overwhelmed by breaking activities down in smaller tasks and plan them by spreading them out over time.
 - Check your calendar at the start of each day and several times throughout the day to help you stay on task and maximize your motivation

PLANNING

- Reward yourself, i.e., with a small break, sending a text to a friend, a telephone call with a loved one, visiting a friend, TV time, a weekend away from campus (not used as an escape but used as a reward)
- Plan big papers well in advance to allow time to meet with your professor to discuss the topic, do library research, work on the content (edit, rewrite, and organize), and use several drafts (it doesn't need to be perfect in a first attempt)
- Plan relaxation strategies frequently throughout the day, such as naming 3 things you are grateful for, journaling on something positive that happened over the past 24 hours, exercise, breathing techniques, yoga, or meditation
 - For mindfulness practice ideas watch:
The Happy Secret to Better Work – Shawn Achor:
https://www.ted.com/talks/shawn_achor_the_happy_secret_to_better_work?language=en

Common Barriers

Additional challenges for students with dyslexia are:

- easily distracted
- switching letters and numbers
- short-term memory problems

Strategies

WHERE

- In the classroom, find a seat in the front of the room to avoid distractions from other students
- Find the time that you study most productively (morning, afternoon or evening)
- Find a quiet space that is used for studying only, so that it becomes a habit that feels much like "going to the office"
- Determine if you learn best alone or with others and choose your study group and classes accordingly

HOW

- Space out various study times throughout the day, i.e. study for 25 min., take 5 min. break, repeat up to 4 times then take a 30-60 min.
- Stick to your plan - avoid temptations of distracting activities by:
 - use headphones
 - turn your vision to a wall in spaces where others work as well
 - find a quiet place
 - turn off your TV
 - turn your phone on airplane mode/do not disturb

LIFE -STYLE TIPS TO PROMOTE RESILIENCE

- A good living environment (i.e., on campus residential hall/off campus apartment) can have a significant impact on your mental and physical health
- Getting 7-9 hours of sleep a night, a balanced diet to even out your blood sugar levels, drink plenty water, limit caffeine and alcohol, and regular exercise help building resilience to (flexibility in dealing with) stress
- Being actively engaged in extracurricular activities in college can positively impact how you perform academically, check out the wide variety of clubs on your campus as teaming up with like-minded individuals is a great way to make friends
 - Building a strong supportive network with fellow students, faculty and staff on campus, a mentor, academic advisor, academic coach, or other services as well as family can lead to the following:
 - feeling a sense of belonging/connectedness
 - feeling well supported
 - Increased resiliency to stress

Advocating for Yourself

When Self help Strategies are Insufficient

- When dealing with overwhelming levels of anxiety, seek out assistance from [UND's University Counseling Center or a therapist](#)
- Depending on individual barriers students experience, they may connect with [UND's Disability Services for Students Office](#) to see if they are eligible for accommodations
- Visit with an [Academic Coach at UND](#) for more information about individually tailored strategies

References

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