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Dysgraphia

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Dysgraphia is a learning disability that affects writing abilities. For children with dysgraphia, the writing process is harder and slower. Writing requires a complex set of fine motor and language processing skills. Children may have illegible handwriting, inconsistent spacing, poor spatial planning on paper, poor spelling, and difficulty composing writing as well as thinking and writing at the same time.



What are the Signs of Dysgraphia?

Signs generally appear when children are first learning to write. Since dysgraphia is a processing disorder, difficulties can vary depending on a child's age and change throughout a lifetime. The following are common characteristics.

Preschool children may be hesitant to write and draw, and say that they hate coloring.

School-age children:



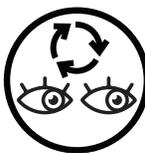
- holds wrist, arm, body or paper in an awkward position when writing
- cramped or unusual grip/may complain of sore hand
- tires quickly while writing
- illegible handwriting that can be mix of cursive and print



- mixes upper- and lowercase letters
- difficulty using scissors well or to color inside the lines
- trouble writing on a line, staying within the lines
- prints letters that are uneven in size and height



- unfinished words or letters, omitted words
- inconsistent spacing between words and letters
- copying or writing is slow or labored
- says words out-loud when writing or has trouble putting their thoughts on paper



- trouble organizing words on the page from left to right
- writes letters that go in all directions, and letters and words that run together on the page
- trouble telling if a word is misspelled
- spells correctly orally but makes spelling errors in writing



- does not know how to use punctuation
- overuses commas and mixes up verb tenses
- does not start sentences with a capital letter



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(cont.)

Teenager:



- writes in simple sentences
- has many more grammatical mistakes than the writing of other kids their age
- exhibits difficulty with syntax structure and grammar when writing



- has a large gap between written ideas and understanding demonstrated through speech
- has difficulty thinking and writing at the same time (taking notes, creative writing)



What strategies can help?



- Use paper with raised lines for a sensory guide to staying within the lines.
- Try different pens and pencils to find one that is most comfortable.
- Encourage proper grip, posture and paper positioning for writing.



- Introduce a word processor on a computer early; however do not eliminate handwriting.
- Be patient and positive, encourage practice and praise effort.
- Allow use of print or cursive - whichever is more comfortable.



- Allow extra time for writing assignments.
- Begin writing assignments creatively with drawing, or speaking ideas into a tape recorder.



- Do not judge timed assignments on neatness and spelling.
- Have students proofread work after a delay – it is easier to see mistakes after a break.



- Help students create a checklist for editing work - spelling, neatness, grammar, syntax, clear progression of ideas, etc.
- Encourage use of a spell checker - speaking spell checkers are available for handwritten work.



- Reduce amount of copying; instead, focus on writing original answers and ideas.



- Have student complete tasks in small steps instead of all at once.
- Find alternative means of assessing knowledge, such as oral reports or visual projects.
- Encourage practice through low-stress opportunities for writing such as letters, a diary, making household lists or keeping track of sports teams.

Resources:

"Dysgraphia" (2017) Retrieved on 1-15-18 from <https://idaamerica.org/types-of-learning-disabilities/dysgraphia/>

"What is Dysgraphia?" by National Center for Learning Disabilities - NCLD (2007) Retrieved 1-15-18 from <http://www.ldonline.org/article/12770>

"Understanding Dysgraphia" by Erica Patino. Retrieved 1-15-18 from <https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attentionissues/child-learning-disabilities/dysgraphia/understanding-dysgraphia>

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