



**Dyspraxia** is a condition that affects the development of age-appropriate competencies in gross and fine motor skills, perception, memory, attention, maths, speech and language and social skills. Approximately 6% of children suffer from the condition (2% being significantly affected), with boys affected four times more frequently than girls.

It is also known as developmental coordination disorder (DCD), motor learning difficulty, 'clumsy child syndrome' and perceptuo-motor dysfunction. Where the condition co-exists with ADHD it is called DAMP or Deficits in Attention Motor Control and Perception.

Parents may notice the problem early on. Their child may have trouble with some of the following:

- balance and co-ordination
- left/right orientation
- spatial skills
- eye control

Fine-motor skills may be affected, such as:

- doing up buttons, tying shoe laces
- picking up small objects
- writing, colouring, painting

Gross-motor skills too, for instance:

- sitting, crawling, walking
- hopping, jumping
- riding a bicycle
- PE, ball-games

Dyspraxia can also cause the following:

- learning difficulties, particularly:
- spelling, reversals, rote learning, sequencing
- jigsaws and sorting
- poor social skills
- behaviour problems
- difficulties with
- attention & task maintenance
- personal organisation
- coping with change in routine

There might also be some speech and language or pronunciation difficulties caused by problems coordinating the various movements of the mouth and tongue.

Children with dyspraxia need considerable support from adults.

### Help at home

#### Getting dressed

velcro on shoes not laces or buckles; lay out clothes in dressing order; loose clothing; avoid ties; larger holes and buttons; elasticated trousers and skirts; clothes with a distinctive front and back, for example, a V-neck sweater, pleated trousers.

#### Eating

Use flexible straws; don't fill cups too full; non-slide mat for plate; curved knives and forks.

#### Getting Organised

keep to a daily routine; use timetables; use post-its as reminders; everything in a specific place; cupboards and drawers labelled.

#### Motor skills

Put aside time to help practice handwriting; buy fun toys that help improve holding, placing, spatial awareness etc; play throwing and catching games; encourage balancing on logs, walking on flower pots; help to learn to ride a bike/trike

**Very important** – Give lots of praise and encouragement!

#### Help at school

Reduce distractions in the classroom, keep desk clutter to a minimum.

Make a personal timetable and encourage use of a diary for upcoming events, homework dates, any extra equipment needed.

Give responsibilities/tasks which should involve others; encourage teamwork and make sure other children offer support especially in PE.

Encourage interaction with other pupils, by helping find and develop common interests such as pop music, fashion, etc.

Make sure that tables and chairs are at the right height and seating posture is correct, with feet on the ground. Note that sitting cross legged on the floor may be uncomfortable.

An angled board for writing and reading books may be beneficial.

Present small amounts of work at a time, set out tasks point by point, use tick boxes to aid completion of tasks, allow extra time and repetition. Allow copying from paper next to them rather than a whiteboard.

Encourage different methods of recording apart from writing.

Use a line guide, window, ruler to aid easier reading.

In PE, give time to practice skills needed.

Offer lots of public praise at the appropriate time

Always pick good points from the child's work.

Depending on the degree of severity, a child with dyspraxia may also benefit from regular interventions from some of the following:

**(Educational) Psychologist:** If a child's difficulties are severe enough to require considerable in and out of school support, a full psychological assessment should be requested. When completed, this may lead to a Statement of Special Educational Needs.

**Occupational Therapists** are usually able to assist with visual-perceptual skills, fine motor performance, and pencil-hold and letter formation.

**Physiotherapists** help with gross motor skills, posture and general body image and management.

**Speech Therapists** can help young people who have speech and articulation difficulties.

Be aware that treatment from too many therapists may result in the child missing a great deal of school, creating its own set of problems.



## USEFUL CONTACTS

### The Dyspraxia Foundation

Helpline: 01462 454986

Support and information for individuals, families and professionals affected by dyspraxia. They also run local support groups.

Web: [www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk](http://www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk)

Email: [dyspraxia@dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk](mailto:dyspraxia@dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk)

### The Dyscovery Centre

University of Wales, Newport

Tel: 01633 432330

Assessment, advice for parents and schools, tailor-made services, training and access to specific resources.

Web: <http://dyscovery.newport.ac.uk>

Email: [dyscoverycentre@newport.ac.uk](mailto:dyscoverycentre@newport.ac.uk)

See also their website [www.boxofideas.org](http://www.boxofideas.org) which has 1000's of practical and easy ideas to help at home and school.

### Therapy in Praxis Ltd

York

Tel: 01904 468855

A paediatric therapy and assessment service for children.

Web: [www.therapy-in-praxis-ltd.co.uk](http://www.therapy-in-praxis-ltd.co.uk)

### Anything Left Handed Ltd

Oxford

Tel: 0845 872 3272

All staff are left-handed; they produce a range of 200 items. They have information for left-handed children, eg: on handwriting.

Web: [www.anythingleft-handed.co.uk](http://www.anythingleft-handed.co.uk)

### British Dyslexia Association

Website: [www.bdadyslexia.org.uk](http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk)

Tel: 0845 251 9002

### Dyslexia Action

Website: [www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk](http://www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk)

Tel: 01784 222300

### The Foundation for Conductive Education

Birmingham

Tel: 0121 449 1569

A charity for children and adults with incurable movement disabilities. Programmes for children with dyspraxia aged 3-14 years (group or individual sessions). Services are free for 0-3's, fees for over 3's. Parents can self-refer.

Web: [www.conductive-education.org.uk](http://www.conductive-education.org.uk)

### The 3D Centre for Specific Learning

Halifax

Tel: 01422 365500

Diagnostic assessments and tuition for children with dyslexia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia and training courses for teachers and school staff.

Website: [www.the3dcentre.co.uk](http://www.the3dcentre.co.uk)

### Isability

Tel: 01779 880065/880030

Produce treasure boxes for use in the nursery, school and home containing fun tasks to enhance fine and gross motor skills.

Web: [www.isability.co.uk](http://www.isability.co.uk)

## READING

See also OAASIS information sheet 'Books – where to find them'

OAASIS publishes **A First Guide to Dyspraxia** in its **First Guide** series (£4.00 plus p&p or you can download it free from our website).

### Routledge Education

(member of the Taylor Francis Group)

Tel: 020 7017 6563 (Marketing)

Website: [www.routledgeeducation.com](http://www.routledgeeducation.com)

(academic and research based) or

[www.routledge4teachers.com](http://www.routledge4teachers.com) for teachers/parents.

### Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Website: [www.jkp.com](http://www.jkp.com)

Email: [post@jkp.com](mailto:post@jkp.com)

Tel: 020 7833 2307

### Sage Publications

Previously Paul Chapman Publishing, for all professionals working in schools and educational settings (includes Lucky Duck classroom resources).

Web: [www.sagepub.co.uk](http://www.sagepub.co.uk)

Email: [market@sagepub.co.uk](mailto:market@sagepub.co.uk)

### SEN Marketing

Books and software for special educational needs

Tel: 01924 871697

Web: [www.senbooks.co.uk](http://www.senbooks.co.uk)

### The internet book shop

[www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)

**Hands on Dyspraxia – Supporting Children and Young People with Sensory and Motor Learning Challenges.** Author Jill Christmas, 2009.

Available through

[www.christmaschildrensclinic.co.uk](http://www.christmaschildrensclinic.co.uk).

**Development Dyspraxia – Identification and Intervention – 2nd edition: A Manual for Parents and Professionals.** Author: Madeleine Portwood, 1999. £23.99. ISBN 978-1-85346-573-4. Available from Routledge Education.

**Dyspraxia: A Guide for Teachers and Parents.** Authors: Kate Ripley, Bob Daines, Jenny Barrett. Includes resource materials. Price £23.99 ISBN 978-1-85346-444-7. Available from Routledge Education.

**Understanding Developmental Dyspraxia. A Textbook for Students and Professionals.** Author: Madeleine Portwood. Price £22.99. ISBN 978-1-85346-574-1. Available from [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk).

## INTERNET SITES

<http://www-unix.oit.umass.edu/~vlellman/cas.html> is a US paper on apraxia (verbal Dyspraxia) and has a link to [www.apraxia-kids.org](http://www.apraxia-kids.org) the Childhood Apraxia of Speech Association of North America (CASANA).

[www.matts-hideout.co.uk](http://www.matts-hideout.co.uk) a website set up and run by a teenage boy, aimed at other kids with dyspraxia.

[www.dyspraxichteens.org.uk/forum/index.php](http://www.dyspraxichteens.org.uk/forum/index.php) is a website dedicated to dyspraxic teenagers.

OAASIS produces a wide range of free Information Sheets, 8 publications entitled 'First Guide to...' and wallet sized cards explaining 9 learning disabilities. Please contact OAASIS (see front of sheet for contact details) for the full list, or view and download them on the website at [www.oaasis.co.uk](http://www.oaasis.co.uk).

All sheets are checked and amended annually. Please ensure you have the current version.