



## Specific Learning Disorders

These are learning difficulties that affect only a specific area of learning, but are not linked to the general level of intelligence of the individual. The four main types of specific learning disorders (or disabilities) are **dyslexia**, **dyspraxia**, **dysgraphia** and **dyscalculia**.

Although there is a high level of co-occurrence between specific learning difficulties, it shouldn't be assumed that if an individual has one type they will automatically have difficulties in each area.

### Dyslexia

Dyslexia is the most common and probably the most well-known of the Specific Learning Disorders. As with dyspraxia, dyslexia usually runs in families. It is characterised by difficulties with processing letters and words, and typically results in individuals mixing up letters within words, and also mixing words within a sentence. It can also result in difficulties with short term memory, and with other executive functioning (organising, sequencing, processing time and perception of time).

### Dyspraxia

Dyspraxia is also known as developmental coordination disorder (DCD) and it is a condition that affects fine and / or gross motor skills.

People with dyspraxia may have persistent difficulties with tying laces, fastening buttons etc. (fine motor skills) and with riding a bike, playing sport, or in simply moving around without bumping into people or things.

Early intervention is recommended, and occupational therapists will be able to identify exercises and strategies to help an individual with their particular difficulties.

### Dysgraphia

Characterised by an inability to write clearly, dysgraphia is more than just untidy writing. As with the other specific learning difficulties it is caused by a neurodevelopmental processing difference, and is not the result of poor teaching or motivation. People with dysgraphia can write, but it takes an unusual amount of effort, time and concentration, and written work is usually very difficult to read with words and letters poorly formed. Using a laptop or other form of word processing is very helpful in allowing an individual to access learning and produce written work.

### Dyscalculia

This is the name given to specific learning difficulties around maths and number concepts. There are likely to be difficulties dealing with numbers at very elementary levels; this includes learning number facts and procedures, telling the time, time-keeping, understanding quantity, prices and money.

An approach which involves using maths throughout the day can be helpful. For example, counting stairs or footsteps, regularly pointing out the time on a clock or watch and sharing out at snack or play times. This all supports the acquiring of mathematical concepts and will be helpful to a child with dyscalculia.