

This is general information for your knowledge and understanding of how to support students with learning disabilities. It is important to remember that Dysgraphia affects all people differently. Speak with the student and family to understand how Dysgraphia affects the student and their learning and environmental needs. It is not Tutor Doctor's role to suggest a learning disability is present in a student, diagnose learning disabilities, suggest a course of action with the school, or to suggest treatment for learning disabilities.

What is Dysgraphia?

Dysgraphia affects written expression. It is a difference in the brain's ability to understand and create written language. Often students who have dysgraphia are labeled as lazy or sloppy because it takes them longer to write and they have difficulty with penmanship and organizing their writing.

Dysgraphia is medically known as **An Impairment in Written Expression**.

What does Dysgraphia impact?

Dysgraphia can affect:

- **Orthographic Coding:** the ability to store unfamiliar words in working memory, which can cause difficulty remembering how to write a letter or word.
- **Motor Skills:**
 - **Gross motor skills:** the ability to make controlled movements with the large muscles in the arms, legs, and torso.
 - Climbing, skipping or jumping
 - Balance
 - Coordination
 - Body awareness: where their body and body parts are in relation to themselves, others, and objects
 - Physical reaction time
 - **Fine motor skills:** the ability to make controlled movements with the small muscles in the hands, wrists, and fingers.
 - Holding a pen or pencil
 - Writing neatly, drawing pictures, or coloring inside the lines
 - Holding and using scissors, rulers, and other tools
 - The formation of letters
- The ability to organize letters on a line.
- Handwriting and penmanship
 - Often messy
 - May write letters that go in all directions
 - May run words together on the page
 - May have difficulty writing on lines and inside margins
 - May have trouble organizing words from left to right
 - May mix upper and lowercase letters
- Spelling
- The ability to put thoughts into organized words or writing
- Organization of information that is stored in memory

Dysgraphia

- Shape-discrimination
- Letter spacing
- The ability to read maps, drawings, or reproduce shapes
- Understanding of rules in a game
- The ability to follow directions
- Chronological storytelling
- Identification of important facts, details, and information OR may provide too much detail and information

Strategies for Supporting Students Who Have Dysgraphia:

- Give the student lots of time when writing.
- Do writing warmup exercises before writing and as a break during writing, such as squeezing a stress ball, shaking your hands quickly, or making a tight fist then stretching your fingers out.
- Consider recording sessions so the student can listen to it again.
- Use a computer for writing.
- Start written assignments and projects as early as possible.
- Use graphic organizers and/or mind maps to organize thoughts and ideas.
- Use the **POWER** strategy for writing.
 - P**- Plan your paper using graphic organizers, charts, or audio recording your ideas.
 - O**- Organize your thoughts and ideas.
 - W**- Write a draft of your paper.
 - E**- Edit your work, but not right away so you can spot errors. Have others proofread it.
 - R**- Revise your work and produce your final draft.
- Create and use checklists for editing work- spelling, grammar, progression of ideas, neatness, etc.
- Break writing assignments and tasks into steps.
- Try different types of pens and pencils to see what works best.
- Use graph paper to keep numbers lined up.
- Use wide ruled writing paper with darker lines or sensory paper with raised lines (you can make sensory paper by tracing the lines with glue. When it dries the student's pencil will bump the line of glue, indicating where they need to stop).
- Create keyword lists of words the student will need to use before beginning a writing task.
- Encourage proper pencil grip and posture while writing.
- Try using different pencil grips to help the student hold a pencil properly.
- Practice writing letters in the air with big arm movements or tracing letters in sand.
- Encourage them to write daily by keeping a diary or private blog, making lists, tracking sports teams, etc.
- Use speech to text software such as *Dragon NaturallySpeaking*.