

*This is general information for your knowledge and understanding of how to support students with learning disabilities. It is important to remember that Dyspraxia affects all people differently. Speak with the student and family to understand how Dyspraxia 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 Dyspraxia?

Dyspraxia is a specific disorder which affects motor skill development. It creates difficulty with fine and gross motor skills, motor planning, and coordination. It is estimated that 6% of children are affected by Dyspraxia and that 70% of all people with Dyspraxia are male. Often students with Dyspraxia have other disorders or disabilities as well, including Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Dysgraphia, mental health needs, and slow processing speed.

Dyspraxia is medically known as **Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD)**.

## What does Dyspraxia impact?

Dyspraxia can affect:

- **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
  - Understanding letter size
- **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
- **Motor Planning:** the execution of movement or the ability to remember and perform steps to make movements.
  - Learning basic movement skills- it can seem like the first time they've done it, even if they've done it before
  - The time it takes to complete physical tasks
  - The student may seem clumsy
- Coordination

## Strategies for Supporting Students Who Have Dyspraxia:

- Reduce visual and auditory distractions.
- Give them lots of time.
- Take lots of breaks.
- Give directions slowly and in short sentences.
- Use graph paper to keep numbers or letters 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).
- Fill a zip-top freezer bag with a few dollops of colored hair gel, push out the air, and tape the top closed. Lay the bag flat on a table and have the student trace letters and/or numbers through the bag. The resistance of the hair gel will help them feel how the letters are formed.
- Trace shapes, numbers, letters, and words.
- Trace letters on a chalkboard using a wet sponge, have the student trace over the wet lines left using the wet sponge. Repeat with a dry sponge and then with a piece of chalk.
- Have the student leave a finger space between words by placing their finger at the end of a word and starting the next word on the other side of their finger. If this is difficult for them to coordinate, use a popsicle stick instead.
- Use speech to text software such as *Dragon NaturallySpeaking*.
- Use a computer for writing.
- Try writing on an inclined surface.
- Try different types of pens and pencils to see what works best.
- Encourage proper pencil grip and posture while writing.
- Try using different pencil grips to help the student hold a pencil properly.
- Guide the student using hand over hand when learning to write or use scissors.
- Chunking- break assignments and tasks into smaller steps.
- Create and use checklists with step-by-step directions and visuals for large assignments.