



## Dyslexia Indicators Assessment Tool



Access to Quality Education Program: managed by  
Palladium on behalf of the Australian Government and in  
collaboration with the Fiji Ministry of Education



## Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a Specific Learning Disability. Specific Learning Disabilities result from problems the brain has in getting, remembering, understanding, organising and using verbal and/or non-verbal information.

Specific Learning Disabilities are due to the way an individual's brain is 'wired'. They may affect listening, thinking, speaking, writing, reading, spelling or mathematical calculation. They are not intellectual disabilities, and people who have specific learning disabilities are not 'slow learners'.

There are three main categories of Specific Learning Disabilities:

1. **Dyslexia – affects reading and writing. The majority of people with a Specific Learning Disability have dyslexia.**
2. Dysgraphia – affects handwriting
3. Dyscalculia – affects mathematics.

Children with dyslexia are often very bright and have average or above average intelligence.

Dyslexia can be confusing for parents and teachers, and frustrating for the child, as the child may be extremely bright and good at many things, but the skills that are so central in a school setting (reading, writing and maths) are difficult.

Children with dyslexia often excel in practical and technical subjects such as woodwork, electronics, cooking, drawing, music, sport and performance. They are often creative, persistent, intuitive, empathetic, and have strong reasoning and problem-solving skills.

Children with dyslexia might find it difficult to learn to read. Some but not all struggling readers may have signs of dyslexia.

### ***Who is this tool for?***

This tool will help teachers identify and support students who may have signs of dyslexia.

### ***When should this tool be used?***

This tool should be used by teachers to identify whether students who are struggling to learn to read may have signs of dyslexia. The tool should be used after teachers have used the Early Grade Literacy Package for Grades 3 and 4

### ***When should this tool not be used?***

This tool should not be used with every child in the classroom.

This tool cannot diagnose dyslexia, but can provide an indication of whether a child might be at risk. Dyslexia can only be diagnosed by an educational psychologist or similar professional.

***How should teachers use this tool?***

If teachers have already applied the teaching strategies in the Early Grades Literacy Package for Grades 3 and 4, and the child continues to struggle to learn to read, use the following checklists:

- Interview the child's parent(s) or caregiver using the questions in Checklist 1, and follow the instructions at the end. Make sure questions are asked sensitively.
- If the answers to all of the questions in Checklist 1 is 'no', complete Checklist 2A with the parent(s) or caregiver, and Checklist 2B based on observations of the child.
- If you suspect the child has signs of dyslexia, read the advice at the end of Checklist 2, and review the Disability Inclusive Education Handbook for Teachers, which can be found in the Toolkit for Disability Inclusive Education in Fiji.

**Checklist 1: Factors that may contribute to academic performance**

Complete this checklist together with the child’s parent. Make sure the questions are asked in a sensitive manner.

Question		YES	NO
1.	Has your child had frequent absences from school? <i>(If the answer is yes, inconsistent school attendance may have affected learning.)</i>		
2.	Has your child been experiencing poor health? <i>(If the answer is yes, sickness and medication may have affected learning.)</i>		
3.	Has your child been distracted from their learning by anything happening at home? <i>(For example, poor diet, inadequate sleep, stressful home environment, trauma.)</i>		
4.	Could your child have a vision or hearing impairment? <i>(If the answer is yes, check vision and hearing to rule out these factors.)</i>		
5.	Does your child display any behaviours, emotions or conversational skills that are inappropriate for their age?		
6.	Has your child been involved in an accident or have any injuries that may impact their learning?		
7.	Has your child been diagnosed with a medical condition or disability other than dyslexia that may affect their learning? <i>(If the answer is yes, ensure that relevant supports are provided. See the Disability Inclusive Education Handbook for Teachers.)</i>		

**If the answer to any of these questions is YES, the student may not have signs of dyslexia.**

**Discuss the identified issue(s) with the child’s parents or caregiver, and develop a plan together.**

**If the answer to all of these questions is NO, move on to *Checklist 2: Indicators of Dyslexia*.**

**Checklist 2: Indicators of Dyslexia**

Complete checklist 2A with the child’s parent(s) or caregiver.

Complete checklist 2B based on your observations of the child. Ask parents or caregivers for additional information if needed.

<b>Checklist 2A: Personal History</b>		<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
<i>Complete this with the child’s parent(s) or caregiver. Ask the questions in a sensitive way.</i>			
1.	Is there a family history of difficulty learning?		
2.	Has your child been recognised by other teachers as a slow learner in the past?		
3.	Was your child slow to develop speech?		
4.	Was your child slow to develop fine motor skills?		
5.	Does your child have difficulty organising himself/herself in his/her daily routines?		
6.	Does your child have difficulty saying words correctly?		
7.	Does your child have difficulty recognising and learning the letters of the alphabet and numbers?		
8.	If English is not your family’s first language, were difficulties evident when your child was learning their first language?		
9.	Are the same difficulties evident when learning in English?		
10.	Does your child have difficulties paying attention?		
11.	Does your child have difficulty concentrating on a task?		
12.	Does your child get easily distracted when working on a task?		
13.	Does your child have poor short-term memory?		
14.	Does your child give up easily or get frustrated when working on certain tasks?		

<b>Checklist 2B: Reading Comprehension / Writing / Spelling</b>		<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
<i>Complete checklist 2B based on your observations of the child. Ask parents or caregivers for additional information if needed.</i>			
1.	Does the student read the same words or sentences incorrectly each time?		
2.	Does the student have difficulty reading nonsense words? <i>(e.g. words with no meaning, such as gan, sasp, fasp, glab)</i>		
3.	Does the student have difficulty identifying individual sounds within a word? <i>(e.g. "ou" in "cloud", the "rai" in "train")</i>		
4.	Does the student display a significant difference between oral (talking) language skills and ability to express their thoughts in writing?		
5.	Does the student consistently forget how to spell words they have been taught?		
6.	Does the student understand maths concepts but have difficulty with word problems in maths?		
7.	Does the student avoid reading out loud or become anxious if asked to read out loud?		
8.	Does the student tend to confuse words that look alike? <i>(e.g. was / saw, pot / top, who / how)</i>		
9.	Is the student often confused by letters that look similar? <i>(e.g. b/d, p/g, p/q, n/u, m/w)</i>		
10.	Does the student have difficulty copying notes from the board?		
11.	Does the student have difficulty reading unfamiliar words?		
12.	Does the student mis-read or leave out small words <i>(e.g. for, of, with, an, it)</i> and word endings <i>(e.g. -ing, -ed, -ly, -s)</i> ?		
13.	Does the student frequently misspell words, including spelling the same word differently within one writing task?		
14.	Does the student lack intonation when reading aloud? <i>(e.g. fails to recognise and pause at punctuation indicators)</i>		
15.	Does the student have difficulty sounding out words? <i>(e.g. one syllable at a time)</i>		
16.	Does the student make unusual spelling errors?		
17.	Does the student read and re-read text before they understand its meaning?		
18.	Does the student forget information quickly after reading long passages of text?		

---

19.	Does the student have difficulty detecting errors in their own written work? ( <i>i.e. when proof reading their own work</i> )		
20.	Does the student have difficulty re-telling a story immediately after reading a text?		
<b>If the answer to <u>at least 3</u> of these questions is YES, the student <u>may</u> have signs of dyslexia.</b>			

## How to support students who may have dyslexia

Teaching and learning strategies used for students who may have dyslexia can be useful for all students. Many of the strategies listed below are useful techniques for the entire classroom.

It is important not to blame the child for their learning barriers or accuse them of not trying hard enough. It is also important to recognise that children who may have dyslexia can learn, but may require different strategies to ensure that they are successfully engaging in all learning activities.

### Setting up the classroom

- Limit visual / auditory distractions.
- Ensure a clutter-free work space (for example, only have the current task on the student's desk with unnecessary books packed away).
- Ensure only the most relevant information is on the blackboard.
- Provide a handout with information from the blackboard for students who have difficulty copying information from the blackboard.
- Consider where the student is sitting – they may prefer to sit close to the front where there are fewer distractions.

### Adapting the delivery of lessons

- Understand the individual student's learning preferences and tailor the teaching to how the student learns best.
- Use clear, direct instruction. Demonstrate instructions wherever possible.
- Differentiate instruction modes based on individual learning preferences.
- Provide handouts to students for important tasks, such as assignments.
- Break down each task step-by-step.
- Use actions, pictures or diagrams when introducing new words. Put new words in context.
- When teaching letters and sounds, encourage students to use their finger to write out letters in the sand or create letter shapes with clay.
- Ensure handouts and other written information is clearly presented, double-spaced, using a non-cursive font such as Arial Narrow. This font has been identified as easier to read.
- Leave writing on the blackboard long enough for students to read or copy down. Ensure the student is not rushing and remember to provide handouts to students with extreme difficulties copying from the board.
- When teaching a practical task, such as cooking or craft, demonstrate the task while explaining it to the class.
- Introduce each new activity with a clear description of the topic.
- When teaching a new topic, introduce all new words, including their spelling and meaning.
- Start with easy skills. For example, if reading is difficult, start with basic reading passages and increase difficulty as the student improves.
- Repetition may help when introducing new topics or concepts.
- Allow additional time.
- Focus on letters and their sounds. Teach phonics explicitly. Present phonics in words and sentences so that they are taught in a context.

### Communicating clearly

- Provide regular positive feedback and encouragement – focus on the child’s strengths and recognise achievements. Children who feel successful, learn better.
- Develop an understanding of the student’s learning style – what form of communication do they best respond to? This will help you to be able to tailor your communication to best suit the student’s needs.
- Be mindful of how instructions are provided – does the child know what is expected of him/her? Check the student has understood what is required. For example, if a child has difficulty reading, and all steps are written on a handout, you may need to demonstrate, explain, or include pictures to help with comprehension.
- Be patient and repeat instructions when necessary – some students may only retain the first two steps of a task. They will, therefore, require you to repeat instructions. Remember that this is not because they are not paying attention or are forgetful but because they have difficulty holding a lot of information in their short-term memory.

### Building independence

- Do not modify or simplify tasks that the student can complete independently.
- Support the development of skills. Children with dyslexia may require more time and different teaching styles but can still achieve the same tasks as others.
- Make tasks challenging yet achievable – ensure the task is set at or just above a child’s current skill level to improve their independence and experience of successful task completion.
- Make learning fun and interesting – ensure the child continues to enjoy activities that they are having difficulty with. If the task is meaningful, children are more likely to be involved.

### Managing behaviour

- Dyslexia may be identified through secondary behaviours, such as a child avoiding difficult work or behaving negatively in class to get out of a reading activity. It is common for children with dyslexia to become frustrated from time to time, especially if they are aware they are not at the same level as their peers. In turn, this can affect self-esteem and confidence and reduce motivation to try new tasks.
- Ask ‘why’ – try and identify the cause for the behaviour. This may help you to develop a behaviour management strategy.
- Focus on addressing learning barriers rather than punishing the behaviour. If you identify why a student is frustrated with a specific task and provide relevant supports, negative behaviour is likely to reduce.
- Be consistent with behaviour management approaches.

### Parent support

- Encourage parents to support their child at home.
- Provide parents with information about dyslexia. Photocopy this guide, and the relevant factsheet and chapter of the Handbook which can be found in the Toolkit for Disability Inclusive Education in Fiji.

***For further advice, see the Disability Inclusive Education Handbook for Teachers, in the Toolkit for Disability Inclusive Education in Fiji.***