

MAKING SENSE OF DYSLEXIA

Millions of people all over the world have dyslexia. What is it and how does it affect their everyday lives?

Next week is Dyslexia Awareness Week (DAW), which aims to spread the word about people living with the learning difficulty and highlight ways in which they can be supported. Charities across Britain will be working with schools and pupils to encourage discussions about dyslexia. So, how does this learning difficulty affect those who have it?

What is dyslexia?

Around 10% of the British population is dyslexic – that's about six million people. Dyslexia is not an illness or a disease, it is a difficulty that affects the way a person learns. It doesn't affect their intelligence; it just means that their brain works a little differently. The exact cause of dyslexia is unknown, but it often runs in the family.

Dyslexia can make it hard for people to learn how to read and write as well as affecting their short-term memory, among other things. To a person with

dyslexia, letters on a page may appear jumbled, blurred or shadowed. It also affects the way people recognise the sounds that groups of letters make. For example, a person with dyslexia might write the word "pests" as "pets" because they get letters mixed up. Dyslexia can be identified by a special test; if a person is found to have it they can then get the support they need.

Dyslexia Awareness Week

Dyslexia Action, a British charity, wants schools to get involved by running awareness lessons. They are running a No Pens Day on 5 October, to encourage speaking and listening skills. Studies have found that some dyslexic children struggle to speak, as well as to write, so giving them a chance to express their thoughts aloud can be helpful.

What is it like to have dyslexia?

Dyslexia can make simple things like going to the shops very difficult. A dyslexic person might not be able to remember what they went to the shops for, or read the writing on the shelves and packaging.

Dyslexia can be frustrating, especially if a person doesn't know they have the learning difficulty. Children might think that they can't learn as quickly as others or that they're not as intelligent. This is not the case; many people with dyslexia have very good logical and creative skills, such as building or inventing and art and design. You can watch some short films about dyslexia on the Dyslexia Action website.

TALITHA
A budding singer who loves to dance, nine-year-old Talitha has dyslexia and so does her sister Grace. Talitha really struggles with her reading and remembering things, but she is getting help from her teacher and Dyslexia Action. "I couldn't write [my alphabet] before, but my teacher, Sally at Dyslexia Action has helped me enormously."



This is how some people with dyslexia see words.

Whe nso mepeop lelook ata page thew ord sare n otsp aced cor rect ly. Whe nso mepeop lelook ata page thew ord sare n otsp aced cor rect ly. Whe nso mepeop lelook ata page thew ord sare n otsp aced cor rect ly.

Some people who have dyslexia say that the words on a page look shadowed or doubled when they try to read. Some people who have dyslexia say that the words on a page look shadowed or doubled when they try to read.

Some people with dyslexia say that the words on a page look blurred from the central point when they try to read them. Some people with dyslexia say that the words on a page look blurred from the central point when they try to read them.

BEN
13-year-old Ben grew up in a Welsh and English-speaking family, which means he could speak two languages by the age of six. Even though he was a bright child, Ben struggled to read and write. He found out he had dyslexia at the age of seven. "Dyslexia can be a horrible thing, until you get the right help," he said.



DID YOU KNOW?
Dyscalculia is another condition where a person's brain works a bit differently. Instead of having trouble reading, a person with dyscalculia has trouble making sense of numbers and maths. People with dyspraxia have trouble with coordination. It can affect things like writing, typing and riding a bike.



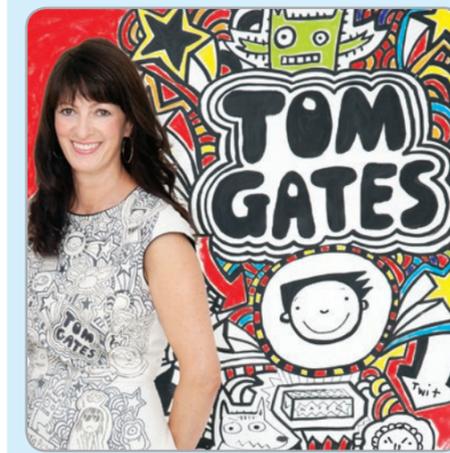
Famous people with dyslexia

Having dyslexia doesn't mean that you can't achieve amazing things. Here are a few famous people who have dyslexia.

Liz Pichon

Author of the *Tom Gates* series, Liz Pichon is dyslexic and so is her eldest son, Zak. As a child, she loved books but found that it took her a long time to read them. So she created the *Tom Gates* books with a mixture of words and pictures.

Pichon told *The Week Junior*: "No one would be more surprised than my head teacher that I write books for a living now. On ALL my school reports she despaired at how shocking my written work was. There were always red pen marks on my work. I loved making up stories but I had always been told that I couldn't spell, so that door was firmly shut – or so I thought. So I would say to anyone who is dyslexic, don't let anyone stop you from doing what you really love to do. Just keep going!"



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"You should prefer a good scientist without literary abilities, than a literate one without scientific skills."

Leonardo da Vinci

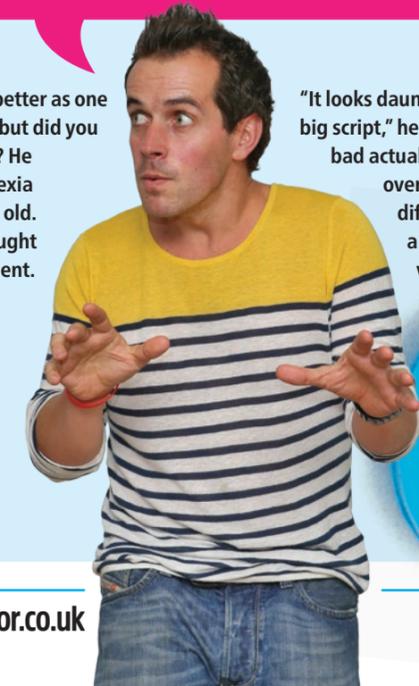
He was an incredible artist, scientist and inventor but lots of people think da Vinci was dyslexic. They suspect this because he wrote his notes backwards, mixed up his words and drew lots of diagrams to illustrate his theories.



"There are thousands of jobs out there that do not require academia... I wouldn't be where I am today without [being dyslexic]."

Dominic Wood

You might know him better as one half of Dick and Dom, but did you know Dom is dyslexic? He found out he had dyslexia when he was 15 years old. Until then, he just thought he wasn't very intelligent. Being dyslexic hasn't stopped Dom from becoming a famous television presenter and learning pages of lines on a daily basis. Dom learns his scripts by reading them over and over again.



"It looks daunting when you get a big script," he says, "but it's not that bad actually. It's always done over and over again from different angles, it takes a long time, so it's not very scary."

TO FIND OUT MORE
about dyslexia and more information about Dyslexia Awareness Week head over to dyslexiaaction.org.uk