

Guide For Teaching

Your Dyslexic Child to Write & Spell From Home



ebook

By Liz Dunoon

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First Edition 2010

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By Liz Dunoon

A note from the author

Having poor spelling skills seems to be very common; some experts believe that up to 50 per cent of adults in English-speaking countries struggle to spell well. If a person is not a good speller does it mean they are not a good writer? Do people spell badly because of a lack of practice, because they are dyslexic or have a poor memory for words? Or is it due to the ever changing nature of the English language with all of its irregularities, inconsistencies and outside influences?

The ability to write and the ability to spell are completely separate skills, yet it is impossible to separate the two when it comes to a finished piece of accurate writing, especially when a child is writing for a test or an exam.

Children with dyslexia can also struggle because they produce untidy and difficult to read handwriting. This can lead to inaccurate letter formation and accidental, non-intentional spelling errors. On the other hand, incorrectly spelt words can also be easily disguised within untidy handwriting.

What parents of a child with dyslexia must remember is that to be a great and creative writer does not mean your child has to write with a perfect hand or be a perfect speller.

Some people have the gift of an incredible memory for accurately spelt words and a huge knowledge of phonological detail (the sound/symbol relationships of letters), but some do not. It does not make them any less intelligent or incapable of high level creative thinking and great writing. Chaucer, Shakespeare, Agatha Christie, Jane Austen and F. Scott Fitzgerald, among many other great writers and journalists, have all been recognised as having difficulty with spelling.

Chaucer (14th century) says of one of his characters, "She wolde wepe, if that she saugh a mous kaught in a trappe." Today that sentence would be written, "She would weep if she saw a mouse caught in a trap." The title page of Richard III, a play by Shakespeare (first printed in 1597), tells of the king's "pittieful murther of his iunocent nephewes." And the sainted Jane Austen in the novel Sense and Sensibility (1811) spells 'stopped' as 'stopt' and 'scissors' as 'scissars'. Rotten spellers can also take comfort in the fact that even some modern authors like F. Scott Fitzgerald have succeeded splendidly even though they couldn't spell well.

In fact there are poor spellers everywhere in every profession and in every social class. Poor spellers have discovered ways to compensate for this by using personalised spell checkers to edit their work (I do this for my husband) or by using technology like computer spell checkers. Your dyslexic child must be made to feel confident enough just to write, type or record their ideas, intentions and amazing stories and then you can devise strategies to help them to deal with the challenge of accurate spelling.

It is schools that seek to create perfect spellers and constantly assess children on their ability to memorise correct spelling patterns in known words. Some children become spelling whizzes; others never seem to master it. Once formal schooling is over, however, spelling does not tend to hold an individual back in life, with many methods available to overcome this weakness.

Writing versus spelling

David's Story

Ian went to meet his two boys at the school bus. His nine-year-old son David jumped down out of the bus angrily threw his school bag at his dad's feet, burst into tears and then ran towards home. Ian was worried. He spoke to his older son, 11-year-old Brian, as they walked home. "Do you know what's wrong with David?" he asked. "Nope!" said Brian, "he's been in a foul mood the whole way home on the bus".

Upon arriving back at the house, Ian looked for David and found him lying on his bed sobbing. "What's the problem? Did something happen at school today?" Ian asked.

"I'm dumb and I'm stupid", shouted David. "I can't write anything, my brain is just dumb and stupid". Secretly Ian was relieved that this was the extent of the problem and he held him tightly until he stopped crying. Finally David was capable of talking. "Today we had to write a story about dragons in our story books, everybody else was writing pages, but I could only write five words; that was it. I knew the words, but I couldn't write them. Something is wrong with me".

"No it's not", said Ian. "You are an amazing storyteller. I hear you making up stories when you play with your action toys; they are so good all the kids in the street always want to join in. Do you remember last Christmas when we went camping, how you were telling those stories around the campfire and everybody was howling with laughter? The ability to be entertaining, now that the true mark of a great storyteller and you've got it". David smiled, a small smile at the happy memory and looked up at his dad. "Well, why can't I write the words in my head down on the page?" he asked.

"I think you are worrying too much about your messy handwriting and spelling; am I right? A good writer never gets all the words right the first time. We will talk to your teacher, Mrs. White, about your story writing tomorrow and together we will come up with some ways to help you to

write your stories. Remember, I am not a very good speller either, but I get by. Katie in the office helps me; it doesn't stop me from running my business, and doing well, and it won't stop you from being successful either.

Your child and their school spelling words

The formal learning and the testing of spelling words can become a task that dyslexic children dislike greatly. The selected words are written on the whiteboard and often children are instructed to copy them into homework books, sometimes up to five times in an attempt to get them to memorise them. Spelling is a skill that is emphasised in every English-speaking classroom around the world, as each term, children work their way through a list of selected words. Spelling tests are generally conducted weekly and test your child's ability to remember and reproduce the words correctly in a written spelling test.

Sometimes the list of words will have similar spelling patterns and may rhyme or have structural similarities. As you can imagine, these styles of word lists are preferable for dyslexic children. For example:

can, pan, tan, ran, man, fan, Dan, ban, Nan, Gran
or
happily, slowly, proudly, instantly, finally, only, excitedly

In some cases the words in the weekly spelling list will be related to a theme the children are studying in class, which can be helpful if it makes them more meaningful. For example:

gold, nugget, mine, mining, miner, pan, spade, rush, prospect, prospector, prospecting, precious, metal

On other occasions the words won't relate to anything and will just be words selected as being at an appropriate level

for your child. They may be chosen in isolation or be part of a structured program that builds spelling skills. It pays to become educated and to go and speak with your child's teacher to discover for yourself how word lists are selected and if there is a spelling program in place at your child's school.

Why having a good time is critical for cementing learning

The teaching, learning and testing of school spelling words has been around for a long time and I think it will be around for some time to come. The key is to help your child to find a way to practise and to remember their spelling words at home so they can reproduce them accurately for their weekly spelling testing. A continually poor result on a weekly spelling test is not good for your child's confidence levels. It is always an option to ask teachers to modify spelling word lists and reduce the numbers of words that are required to be learnt. This seems to be a fairly common practice in most classrooms, so your child should not feel too different. You can always tell them that word lists can be increased as their spelling skills improve.

Dyslexic children tend to need smaller learning steps, more practice, and more repetition. The ultimate aim is to ensure they have fun while they learn so the new learning becomes more readily cemented in their brain, creating a building block for further learning.

Remember when we learn with laughter we are more likely to remember what we learn. This is due to the release of dopamine, a happy brain chemical that aids memory retention.

Five fun ways to learn school spelling words

Musical instruments

Write the words out in larger print onto paper. Break the words up into syllables with a hyphen to show the word parts.

You can use colours if this helps. For example: 'car –pet' or 'im-ag-ine'. Get your child to use a musical instrument to play the rhythm. If the words are simple one-syllable words, use the instrument to highlight the sound units. 'c-a-t' would be three beats of the drum or toots on the recorder. The child would say the word, and then beat the drum while they say the letter sounds to spell the word. You could change sounds or notes for the vowels and consonants if you like.

Recording your child's voice

Use a voice recorder, a computer or a tape recorder to record your child saying the spelling words and how to break them into word parts and spell them. This can be a great way to remember words with unusual spelling like "Wednesday". Your child can be taught to record their voice saying "Wed – nes – day"; this provides an audio clue as to how to remember the correct spelling. I still use my brain's internal voice recorder to reproduce "lin – ger – ry" to remember the spelling for 'lingerie'. My daughter does the same for the word "pe-o-ple", a word she always find troublesome. A recording device can prompt your child to remember their own secret code, which will then enable them to remember how to spell a tricky word. If your child struggles to write and form their letters accurately, it may be a good idea to speak to your child's teacher about being assessed via an oral spelling test rather than a written test.

Matching games

Kids love a personalised timed challenge. Write up to five words, broken down into phonemes (single units of sounds in words), onto separate single sheets of notepad, maybe like this to begin with: 'b – r – ai – n' for 'brain' or 'de – c – ei – ve' for deceive. Put the word parts in one location and have the complete words written in large print in another location. See how long it takes them to reassemble the phonemic word parts below the written examples. This will encourage visual, audio-tactile and kinaesthetic skills as they move around to reconstruct words. For children who are active, make it challenging and increase the distance between the

two. At the end, orally test them to see if this helps them to learn their spelling words.

Active learning

Some children need to move in order to engage their brain to learn. By engaging as many senses as possible you are often making learning more effective. Get children to look at the word. Let's say, for example, 'panic'; say the word and then chant it to them, "p – a – n – i – c". Get them to repeat it back to you three times while they are active. They could be doing a lap of the backyard, jumping on the trampoline, dancing, skipping, whatever your child likes to do. Get them to say the word and chant it back to you three more times. Then they must quickly write it down twice on a piece of paper. There are lots of variations on this activity – just use your imagination and see what works.

Painting or crafting to spell

Dyslexic children often struggle with the fine motor skill of writing and are much faster and happier using a variation on a pen or pencil to reproduce spelling words for learning purposes. Colour can also be incorporated into this medium to highlight sound symbol relationships or syllable breakdown. You can suggest:

- Chalk on a blackboard, concrete or fence
- Highlighter felt pens on tracing paper over the correct enlarged copies of the spelling words
- Paintbrush with paint on paper or using water on the pavement
- Finger painting with paint on paper, using shaving cream on a table top or homemade slime/gloop
- Writing in the air with a finger, writing on someone's back with a finger
- Using a whiteboard with non-permanent marker
- Making them out of pebbles, sand, soil from the garden
- Drawing them in the sandpit, in the dirt, in jelly crystals
- Making them out of clay or play dough or bread/biscuit dough

- Laying bubble-wrap over the tops of correctly-spelt enlarged spelling words and letting children pop the bubbles or even writing words directly onto bubble wrap with a permanent felt pen and getting children to pop them.

Be creative. Always check to see if this is assisting your child's memory of how to spell the words. Add a speaking and auditory element when you can to add to the multi-sensory experience.

Let your child's teacher know what you are attempting and check if your new multi-sensory methods are improving your child's memory for spelling skills and their class test results. It is good to have feedback when you are trying new things.

Getting your dyslexic child to write

Alistair's story

Alistair was a student of mine in the first preparatory class I ever taught. Bethany, his Mum, came in to see me explaining that Alistair was a miracle baby. He had been born prematurely at 24-weeks and although happy and healthy, he was struggling to meet his developmental milestones, particularly as far as his handwriting and his knowledge of letters and sound relationships went. I thanked her for this background information, as this is vital if a teacher is to help a student to be successful from day one.

Alistair, of course wasn't the only one in the class of five and six-year-olds who struggled to write neatly. I devised a method using large coloured pieces of paper, which the children selected and I ruled well-spaced lines onto the bottom of the paper so they could write their first ever story. The children were all very excited and they eagerly started writing. The variation in skill level was amazing. Some were writing hieroglyphics (random symbols) with no spaces and some were writing full words in full sentences with capital letters, punctuation and very few errors. Most students though, fell somewhere in the middle, with some getting

frustrated and caught up because they wanted to be able to spell every word correctly, even though I told them not to worry about their spelling. Sometimes children are born spelling perfectionists and sometimes their parents are and pass the need to spell perfectly onto their children.

During this writing activity some children wrote five words and some wrote 10 sentences. When they were happy with what they had written they were asked to bring their work to me and I would scribe in the correct form of exactly what they had been attempting to write. I did not alter their writing in any way. I wrote above it. The children were very excited because their stories had been validated and published. There was no red pen or crossings out and the child returned to their seat to draw a picture to match their story. This writing exercise enabled me to see exactly where all the children were up to.

Alistair came to me with his story and as he read it to me I noticed every set of light, feathery pencil strokes on the page represented a word. It was easy for me to scribe because the structure of words already existed with word beginnings and endings. Every now and again I would notice an attempt at a correct beginning letter and the lengths of the words seemed to be fairly representative of what you would expect. More importantly, his story was filled with beautiful describing words, and had the quality of a delightful children's storybook. I could tell that Alistair's parents had exposed him to wonderful stories before he had begun school. He was so excited that his words could be recorded and written and he smiled from ear to ear. By the end of the day all the stories were up on the classroom wall at their eye level so they could read and re-read them in their correct form whenever they chose too.

That afternoon, when school ended and the bell rang all the mothers, grandmothers and carers flooded into the classroom. Most of the children dragged them straight over to look at their stories. I saw Bethany staring at Alistair's work. "Alistair, this story is wonderful", she said to him. "Did you write it yourself?" she said, glancing at me as she spoke. I let

Alistair answer for himself. “Yes” he said, “I wrote it for you”. I nodded towards Bethany to let her know he was telling the truth. Bethany’s eyes misted over, she was overwhelmed by his effort and I could see she was going to cry, so I said in a loud voice, “Why don’t we read it to mummy, Alistair?” And I helped him to do this while Bethany composed herself.

Alistair went on to become one of my most prolific writers. He was so motivated that he became determined to improve in other areas as well. It was a very slow process, but his handwriting skills, spelling, and his reading improved dramatically as the school year progressed. He was still an average students in terms of his ability, but his story writing was incredible and a joy to read and share with the class.

At the end of the year we were instructed to award certificates to students for a range of achievements, including one titled ‘Most Improved Student’. Alistair received this award quite simply because his improvement had been outstanding. I found Bethany standing at the bag racks with the certificate in her hand and tears streaming down her face. “After all we have been through,” she said, “Alistair was never meant to make it and so many times he nearly didn’t and now here I am standing here with this certificate in my hand. I can’t thank you enough.” “He deserved it,” I said giving her a tissue. “I may have helped”, I told her, but you gave him the words. You read him the stories and spent time with him, you helped him to practise reading and writing and you believed in him against the odds. That certificate is just a tiny piece of cardboard but it recognises all Alistair’s effort and all of your hard work. Congratulations.”

Why your child needs to learn to write before they can spell

The expectation of perfect spelling and handwriting quite often gets in the way of creative writing for a dyslexic child. Your child needs to develop enough skill or be given enough provisions so that when they attempt to write and capture their ideas and intensions, the content of their work is not lost due to poor handwriting skills and a lack of word knowledge. You need to assist your child to arrive at this point sooner

rather than later. Quite simply, it is all about their self-esteem and confidence.

Children who struggle to spell well will often avoid writing tasks. When they do have to write they will often choose to use the least amount of words possible regardless of their broad vocabulary to avoid revealing their poor spelling abilities to their classmates and teachers.

Parents can be vital in assisting the writing process by:

- Encouraging their children to have a go.
- Taking the emphasis off spelling and putting it back onto oral expression of ideas and use of vocabulary.
- Exposing children to great written material. This does not have to be just by expecting them to read more. They can also listen and watch.
- Helping them to practise and develop their fine motor co-ordination and handwriting skills or getting them typing and using a word processor.
- Teaching them about word structure and decoding skills.
- Encouraging them to find a writing buddy/teacher at school who can be on hand to provide an accurate spelling quickly so they can get back to writing, or even to edit their work for them.
- Being available to edit their child's writing, finding someone else who can or by utilising methods of editing their child's written work for spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors using technology.

The value in your child's writing is in the writing itself, not in it's perfect form.

Dyslexic children can often benefit from the use of a writing map or graphic organiser. This is a visual planner that can be created specifically for a writing task. This plan can offer a visual structure to assist your child to organise their thoughts and effectively plan their writing task. Key words or phrases

and difficult spellings can be included in this plan, as can the correct order of written information that needs to be included. You will find examples of free downloadable graphic organisers on the book's website www.HelpingChildrenWithDyslexia.com

How to teach spelling for life, not just for a spelling test

By teaching your dyslexic child to become more familiar with the structure and habits of words in the English language your child may begin to feel more comfortable with operating and succeeding in a school environment full of words.

Words are not just random letters; the letters in words do follow patterns and systems, which if known, will enable your child to understand them with more ease. It would be very boring and tedious to try to cover every spelling rule in this book so instead we are going to cover some strategies, which will enable your child to gain more confidence when attempting to spell and write words.

Syllables

Syllables are the largest units of sound that make up a word. Don't be confused by letter sounds or phonics, syllables are more about the spoken rhythm in words. You can clap, tap, or sing the syllables in words. When writing, they provide a great platform for understanding the structure of a word and what word parts need to be included when writing the word. For example 'gardening' becomes three sound units "gar – den – ing." Now when your child tries to write it, it becomes much easier to have a go and the chances are that, even if a child gets it wrong, it will be close enough to be recognisable. Encourage your child to say words out loud or under their breath when they are attempting to write them. This will engage their auditory processing skills as well as their visual processing skills.

Prefixes and Suffixes

Prefixes and suffixes together are known as 'affixes' or common attachments to words. They are used regularly in long words. For example:

'incomptable' or 'in – compat – ible'.

Prefixes go at the beginning of words and suffixes go at the end of words. These are syllable parts in words that are used over and over again in words in the English language. If your child is familiar with them long words will not seem so daunting.

Here is a good way to look at them - look at this word:

'reporting' or re – port – ing

re is the prefix

port is the base or root word

ing is the suffix

Now look at how these word parts can be used in other words:

re – move

de - port

go - ing

re – sult

im – port

fast - ing

re - surge

ex – port

happen - ing

re – percussion

sup – port

do - ing

re - sale

rap – port

run – ning

All prefixes and suffixes have meanings and knowing these meanings will give your child a good basis to predict the spelling of many longer words. Examples of some of these are:

Prefixes

re – which indicates something is 'done again' or 'repeated'

con/com - which indicates 'coming together' or 'combining'

pre – meaning ‘in front of’ or ‘before’

un – meaning ‘not’

extra – meaning ‘more than’

Suffixes

er – indicating ‘a person who does something’

ness – indicates the ‘state of’

less – indicating, of course, ‘less’ or ‘without’

logy – ‘the study of’

ion, sion, tion – indicates ‘the state of’

For more prefix and suffix lists please go to the website

www.helpingchildrenwithdyslexia.com

How to create a spelling and writing prompt book for your child

It is a great idea to give your child a spelling and writing resource book, which they can keep with them at school, simply titled, “My Spelling and Writing Book”. This can be created on the computer so it can be added to at any time or, more simply, in a handwritten notebook, which you, your child or your child’s teacher can add to at any time. Suggestions of words to include in this book may be:

- Lists of prefixes and suffixes and their meanings
- A list of words that constantly cause trouble for your child, broken down into syllables. For example: ‘representative’ written as rep – re – sent – a – tive, use colours to show syllables if this helps your child further. This list may also be created based on a school subject or topic of study. In primary school this might be English terms. For example – nouns, verbs, reading, writing. In secondary school it may be more like – Shakespeare, antonym, Chaucer, tense, comprehension.
- A list of the most commonly used words that your child often spells incorrectly. If you remember, these are the commonly used words that make up approximately 25

per cent of the written words in the English language.
For example – said, why, the, you, was, for, are, who

- A list of homophones – these are words that sound the same, but have more than one different spelling and meaning. These need to be recorded with an example to prompt your child as to which is the correct word to use in their writing. The English language has lots of these to trip your child up, but some of the more common examples are:

to – I went to soccer.

too – I ate too many lollies.

two, 2 – I have two friends.

there – ‘a place’ – We went over there.

their – ‘belonging to’ – That is their jumper.

they’re – ‘shortened form of they are’ – They’re coming with us.

You can find more examples of these on the website,
www.helpingchildrenwithdyslexia.com.

- Include some irregular words that constantly cause your child trouble. These are words that invariably can't be sounded out or are from a foreign country with letter patterns that break the rules of the English language. Include a visual aid or graphic to provide an accurate prompt. This list of words may include words like:
 - though, through, thorough, tough, trough, rough
 - fight, plight, flight, might, fright, sight, right, light
 - reign, foreign, sovereign
 - champagne, champignon, chaperone
- A list of proper nouns that list a specific item and have a capital letter no matter what. For example: Isabelle, Zachery, Czechoslovakia, Mr. Heighton, University Of Melbourne, Declaration Of Independence, Vegemite, Beijing, Mercedes Benz, Wollongong, Zeuss

- Dyslexic children are sometimes overwhelmed with thoughts, ideas and the order of information when they are attempting to compose a piece of writing. Creating writing maps for particular styles of writing (genre) can provide an important planning tool, which will enable your child to organise their thoughts and get started. This can be a set of questions they need to answer, a series of interconnecting boxes that can be written in or it may be formed like a family tree; whatever works for your child. For examples of writing maps, go to the book website.
- Good writing is often incredibly entertaining because of the way a talented writer uses words. The English language, for all its annoying inconsistencies, offers writers an incredible array of descriptive and emotive words. If you can help your child to build a list of these interesting words to draw upon, this can help to improve the quality of their writing. Dyslexic children often prefer to write very little and use only basic words that they know how to spell. If you remove this spelling road block, your child may be much happier to write at their full potential, based on their verbal vocabulary rather than their written one. This list can include:
 - Words to use instead of “said”. For example: exclaimed, shouted, grumbled, whispered, replied, stuttered, mouthed, cried
 - Adjectives or describing words. For example: dark, indigo, angry, long, annoying, spotted, fast
 - Verbs or doing words. For example: jump, hop, see, drive, fall, type, sit, swim, fly, knit
 - Adverbs or words that can be added to a verb. For example: erratically, slowly, happily, quickly
 - Descriptive words that are specific to a topic or subject area

- Words that can join sentences, ideas and thoughts. For example: but, and, however, therefore, furthermore, similarly, moreover

Your child's spelling and writing prompt book will become a treasure because it will enable your child to write or type freely without spelling blocks. I'm sure you can imagine their friends asking to borrow it for some inspiration. The key is to get your child into the habit of adding to it constantly. It will most likely evolve and may need to be copied and rewritten from time to time as your child moves through the school years. Whatever you do, don't let them lose it – maybe you should photo copy it just in case.

Helping your child overcome reversing and transposing letters and numbers

Have you ever had a word that you can never quite remember how to spell, (mine is 'rapport') or a phone number that you can't quite remember or a pin number on your credit card that you are never quite sure of? You always have that cloud of doubt hanging over your head, because you don't want to get it wrong - again.

Children who regularly reverse, transpose or confuse letters and numbers often have that same nagging, doubtful feeling. As a young child learning to write they often don't even realise the symbols are around the wrong way. Then as time progresses and enough people begin to point out their errors, they are never quite sure whether they got it right or not. In a dyslexic child's mind a letter is a letter no matter which way it is facing, just like a tree is a tree or a chair is a chair no matter which way you look at it. The letter and numbers below are the ones most likely to be reversed or confused:

a b c d e f g h j k m n p q r s y

B C D E F G J K L M N P R S Z O R W

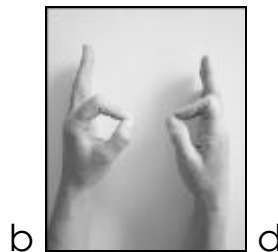
2 3 4 5 6 7 9

In order to assist children to remember and become sure of the correct direction of these letters and numbers your will

need to provide them with a prompt to enable them to be sure of which way they go. Of course, repetition and practice will also help to cement learning. It is important to do this for your dyslexic child because the uncertainty they feel every time they write these letters and numbers will interrupt their thought processes and slow down their output of written work.

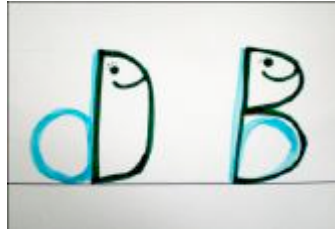
Ways to help your child overcome transposing

1. Ask your child's classroom teacher for a laminated set of alphabet letters and numbers which can be attached to the lid of your child's classroom desk. Get an extra copy for home.
2. When writing, ensure your child begins their letters in the correct place so that children are not tempted to write numbers and letters round the wrong way or back to front. Starting at the right place is critical for accurate letter formation and cursive (joined letter) writing at higher grade levels. If you are not sure where letters should start ask your child's teacher to draw you some diagrams using dots and arrows.
3. The word 'bed' is good to use to highlight common 'b' and 'd' reversals. Children can use their left hand to make a 'b', their right hand to make a 'd' and imagine the 'e' is in the middle.



4. Capital 'B' and 'D' can also provide a good visual prompt. Small 'b' sits inside the **belly** of capital 'B' and small 'd' hangs out the back of

capital D taking up more room. It is on a **different** side. 'b' for belly, 'd' for different.



different

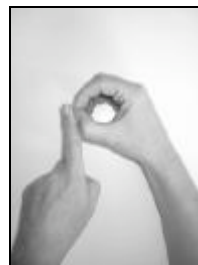
belly

5. The letter 'L' if made with the straight thumb and pointer finger on the **left** hand is a good reminder of the direction of 'L'



L for Left

6. If using the Sign Language Alphabet the formation of 'P' can help children to remember its direction.



p

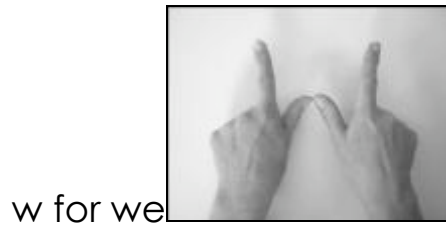
7. The same visual cue can be applied to the letter 'q' by using the other hand.



q

8. 'M' and 'W' can also cause difficulties for children with dyslexia. Here are two ways your

child can use their fingers to help them to remember.



9. Attach each of these tricky letters and numbers to a meaningful piece of information, which can be memorised. It may be a person's name, a house number, a street name or someone's age. Use these to provide a prompt and as a point of practice. For example:
 - Dad's name is Peter. He is 29 and lives in Noonan Street at number 34.
10. Create a tactile poster using sandpaper, string, corrugated cardboard and/or texture paint and let your child feel the letters and numbers while they say them.

Through practice and repetition, your child will eventually learn which way letters and numbers must be written. Remember though, they will always have days when they are tired, or under pressure and they may make this error, just as you might just forget that credit card pin number again.

How to reinforce pencil grip and control

Schools seem to vary on how much assistance they provide to little fingers to control a pencil while learning to write. There is a range of learning aids, which schools can provide, but if they don't, at a very reasonable price you can walk into a newsagency or stationary shop and buy them for yourself. These consist of:

- ✓ Thicker pencils which are easier for little fingers to grip
- ✓ Thicker pencils which have a triangular shape and provide flatter surfaces for little fingers to grip
- ✓ Slide on pencil grips in a range of shapes. Some of these are triangular, some are more like a blob of plasticine but cleverly provide a guide for correct finger placement and pressure. These are made for both right and left-handed children.

Some children will persevere and will practise, practise, practise until they can write neatly and at a reasonable speed. Other children aren't as bothered by their irregular and untidy writing or it is just too frustrating to persevere. There also seems to be a group of children who never seem to be able to write legibly- whether this is though a lack of motivation or a skill they will just never master, I am not sure. Using technology can be the sure-fire way to allow these children to move forward and keep up with their peers.

Using computers and technology to teach your dyslexic child to write and spell

All children need to learn to type and word-process, but for some dyslexic children it can be the difference between whether they get through secondary school and tertiary education or not. I highly recommend a typing tutor aimed at your child's age level to help them to hone these skills as early as you can arrange it. As children learn to visualise where letters are on the QWERTY keyboard, this skill can be transferred into learning the patterns, which relate to the spelling of certain words. All of a sudden it is not about the spelling, but the pattern of movement as your child's fingers move over the letter keys in a particular order to spell a particular word.

Children can benefit from recording themselves while they come up with content for factual and creative writing projects and then use these voice recordings for later transcription into written or word-processed documents.

Another step in this process is voice-activated software, which can be trained to respond to your child's voice as they speak. You generally set this up by getting your child to read a passage of text into the computer program. You may need to help them do this by whispering into their ear as they say the words out loud. The software then learns to recognise your child's voice and when they speak the software will identify the spoken words and magically they will appear in a new document.

The industry of software, hardware and technical devices for people with learning disabilities is growing rapidly. This is because such technology is so needed, and not just by our children. Everybody who needs to read, write and spell can benefit, from the business person who has to prepare a speech for a presentation to the author who is writing a new book, to the manager who needs to create a prompt to remember something that needs to be done.

I will include information about these innovative programs, where you can conduct research about them and where you can buy them on the website www.helpingchildrenwithdyslexia.com.

In conclusion

When your child started school it was never their intention to struggle and, on some days, even fail. Most children start school full of enthusiasm and filled with excitement. Finally they get to hang with the big kids and get the opportunity to learn to write and spell. When this is difficult, a child will often become baffled and frustrated, with many coming to the conclusion that they are just not that smart or thinking something is wrong with them. Nothing is usually further from the truth, yet much of a child's school success is generally measured with methods that utilise writing and spelling skills.

Research tells us that children with dyslexia are of equal intelligence to all other children. It is parents who must ensure that their children have the opportunity to give of their best while at school. In this book I have given you many ideas to help your child with their writing and spelling. If you apply

those strategies that will personally assist your child you will be offering bridges of support, increasing their confidence and allowing them to shine.

Computer and Internet programs for teaching reading

You will notice I have left out any reference to writing and spelling programs or computer software that teaches writing and spelling skills. I did this intentionally to demonstrate to you that teaching your child to write and spell does not have to cost you money. There are of course many fantastic programs, many free which can supplement your teaching methods. You can find a huge list of them in the free resources pages, which can be found on the website www.HelpingChildrenWithDyslexia.com I will continually add to this resources list as more programs become available.

We wish you well. Your child's journey to a happier more successful place has just begun.

About the Author



Liz Dunoon is a teacher and a mother to three children all with dyslexia. It was through her own research to help her children that she discovered a huge divide between what is known by researchers about dyslexia and what is happening to support children with dyslexia in our schools today.

Liz wrote this book as a response to the many parents who are seeking solutions to their child's struggle with writing and spelling. She believes all children can learn to write and spell and the process is the same for all individuals whether they have dyslexia or not.

The difference is that children with dyslexia need to have their processing deficits and their learning strengths identified, as this will provide the key to effective teaching strategies, telling parents how their child can achieve learning success. Children with dyslexia invariably need smaller learning steps, more practice and more repetition to remember what they have learnt.

Children with dyslexia often struggle to keep up with their peers in the school classroom. This inability to keep up means gaps can appear in a child's understanding of the reading process, making it harder for them to make progress. It is for this reason that parents are vital, because they can advocate on behalf of their children and offer this extra assistance. This book will show you how to teach your child to write and spell from home.

Liz Dunoon has also written:

Helping Children With Dyslexia

21 Super Strategies To Ensure Your Child's Success At School.

EBooks

Guide for Teaching Your Dyslexic Child To **Read** From Home

Guide for teaching Your Dyslexic Child To **Do math** From Home

Available from the website www.HelpingChildrenWithDyslexia.com