



CAMBRIDGE
English

Supporting learners with dyslexia: A guide for teachers

Cambridge

English Qualifications

A2 Key for Schools
B1 Preliminary for Schools
B2 First for Schools



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Who this guide is for

Many teachers have learners with dyslexia in their exam preparation classes. This guide is for you. With lots of practical tips and ideas for lesson plans, it will help you prepare materials to support learners with dyslexia in preparation for our qualifications – A2 Key for Schools, B1 Preliminary for Schools and B2 First for Schools.

About Cambridge English Qualifications

Learning English is about more than just exams and grades. It's about having the confidence to communicate and access a lifetime of enriching experiences and opportunities. Cambridge English Qualifications are designed specifically for school-age learners, giving them regular milestones to keep them motivated.

For more information on each exam see cambridgeenglish.org/schools or click on each exam name below:

A2 Key for Schools

B1 Preliminary
for Schools

B2 First for Schools

How to use this guide

- Try the practical ideas in the **Activity pages** and reflect on how these techniques affect the processes of learning and teaching in your classroom.
- Think about your learners' different learning styles, needs and preferences and consider what approaches are most helpful to them.
- You can navigate the document by using the hyperlinks in the text and the buttons on each spread:

Previous page

Next page

First page

Previous view

Key terminology

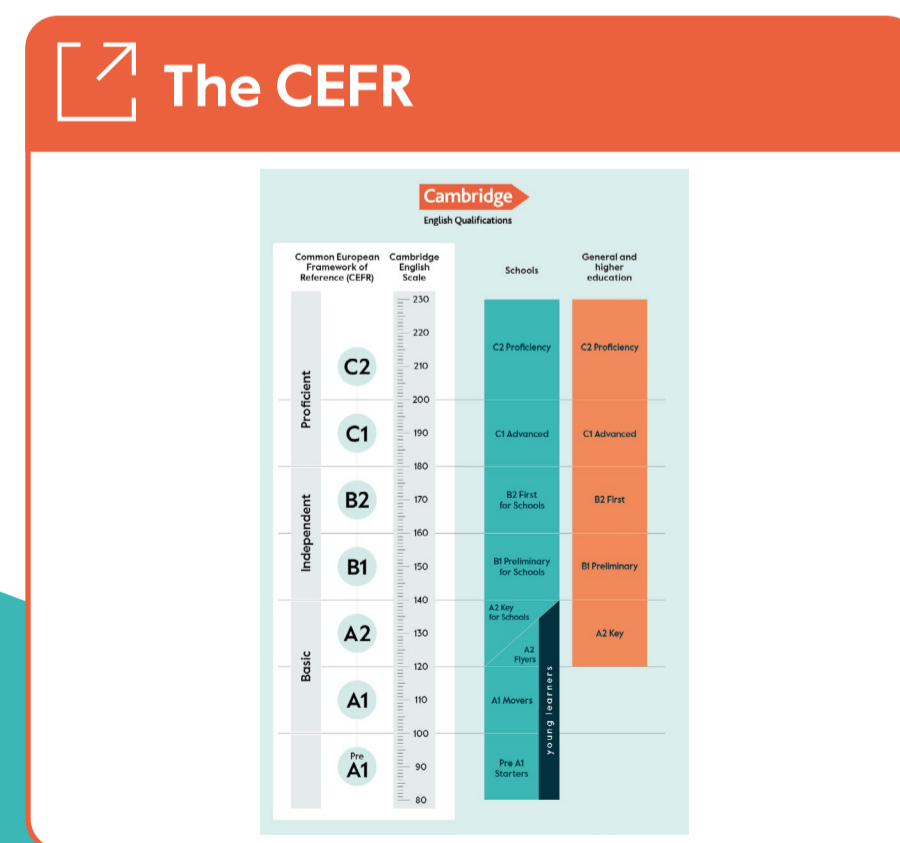
Dyslexia and language assessment are specialist fields and there is some common terminology which might be unfamiliar to you. Learning to recognise these terms will help you to understand this guide.

Term	Definition
Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD)	A difference or difficulty with particular aspects of learning. The most commonly diagnosed SpLDs are dyslexia, dyspraxia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyscalculia and dysgraphia. These differences may be overlapping or occur simultaneously.
Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)	A learning difficulty or disability that makes learning a challenge.
Dyslexia	A learning difficulty which primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling.

There are also some other terms in this guide which are more widely used in the field of assessment. When these terms appear in this guide, you'll find an explanation nearby in a glossary box like this:

Key terminology

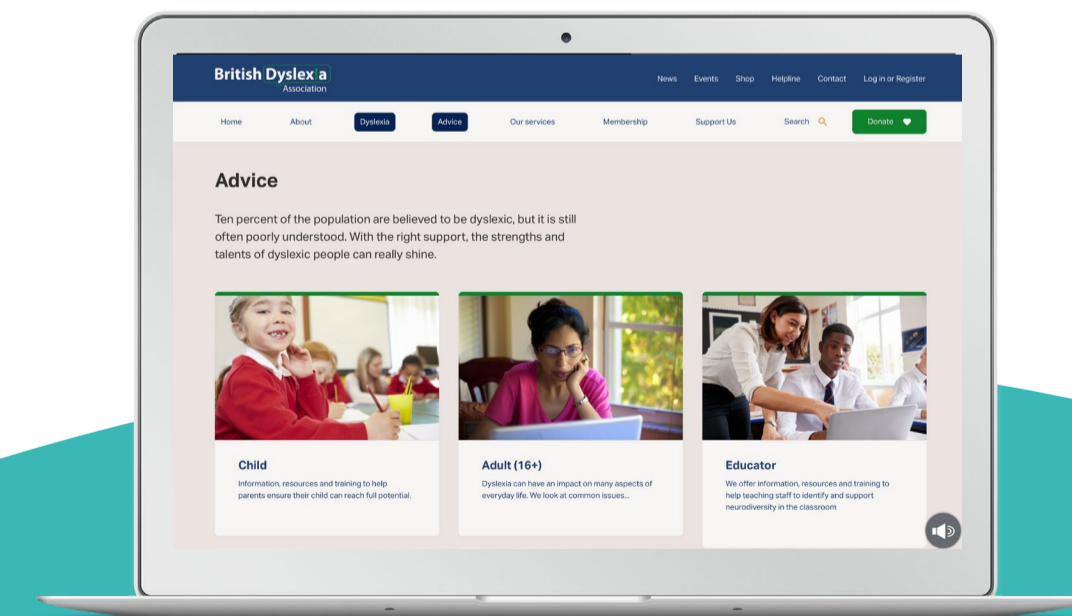
The **Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)** is an international standard for describing language ability. It uses a six-point scale, from **A1** for beginners up to **C2** for those who have mastered a language. This makes it easy for anyone involved in language teaching and testing, such as teachers or learners, to see the level of different qualifications.



Background to learners with dyslexia

Dyslexia is a type of Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD) that is thought to be present at birth and have lifelong effects. Learning difficulties are not related to a person's intelligence, but are caused by differences in the ways the brain processes information, and vary greatly from person to person. Dyslexia mainly affects the development of literacy and language-related skills, and learners with dyslexia are likely to encounter challenges with phonological processing, working memory and processing speed.

Term	Definition
Phonological processing	Using the sounds of one's language (phonemes) to process spoken and written language. Learners with dyslexia may struggle to distinguish between different sounds, and their reading may be slow or imprecise.
Working memory	The amount of information that can be held in mind and used in carrying out tasks. Learners with dyslexia may struggle with remembering information such as instructions, new vocabulary words, or the content of reading or listening texts.
Processing speed	The pace at which we take in information, make sense of it, and begin to respond. Learners with dyslexia may find it difficult to work out rules and patterns of language usage or make sense of information in spoken or written texts.



For more information on dyslexia, please visit the [British Dyslexia Association](https://www.bda-dyslexia.org.uk/).

Teaching learners with dyslexia

Reading in English

While learners with dyslexia frequently have good visual spatial skills, they often struggle with fluent, accurate reading. This can affect their reading comprehension as they may be able to sound out words but struggle with their meaning. This can make learners with dyslexia feel uncomfortable reading aloud and they are likely to misread or mix up common words. So as a teacher, give support for your learners to help distinguish words with similar spellings.



Speaking in English

While learners with dyslexia tend to have a sophisticated receptive vocabulary, they are typically less sensitive to English phonology, and so you may need to help them with reproducing and discriminating between sounds. They may also speak with lots of pauses as they search for the words to use, so it is good to be aware of this when you are doing pronunciation and speaking activities.



Writing in English

Learners with dyslexia often demonstrate strong creative, imaginative and practical skills, but may struggle with copying work from the board, and need support with handwriting, which is likely to be unclear or illegible. Difficulty with spelling and poorly structured, or disorganised written work, are also typical features of learners with dyslexia, as they may know the words they need but you will need to support them with spelling and organising their ideas.

Listening in English

While they tend to have good interpersonal skills, learners with dyslexia may find recalling and following instructions challenging, and they are likely to struggle with phonological awareness, especially at a phonemic level. So you may need to give guidance to help write down what they hear.



Because the challenges of dyslexia vary from person to person, the focus should be on making the learning environment as **inclusive** and supportive as possible.

★ **Top tip: see Activities**

Planning inclusive lessons

All learners can become overwhelmed by tasks and activities that require them to think about lots of different things at once, and this applies to learners with dyslexia too. You may be familiar with many of these suggestions, as they benefit all learners, but they are especially supportive for learners with dyslexia.

- ✔ Present new language in small and manageable chunks so as not to overwhelm learners, and focus on key and core language from the main content.
- ✔ Regularly check in with your learners by using **concept-checking questions** to assess their understanding.
- ✔ Try to use **multisensory** input and activities to give learners more than one way to make connections and learn language. For example, use flash cards, puppets, story videos and real objects in the classroom. The **language activity** has a good example of this.

Key terminology

Concept-Checking Questions (CCQs) are designed to check or support a learner's understanding of a new word or grammatical form, and offer more in-depth insight than just asking 'Do you understand?' Example CCQs for the sentence 'The cat sat on the mat': 'What thing do you know that one sat?' 'What's the opposite of sat?' 'Are there spots?'

Activities

Preparing learners with dyslexia for Cambridge English Qualifications

With the need for **inclusivity** in creating a successful learning environment for all learners, here are some lesson plans for helping your learners prepare for A2 Key for Schools, B1 Preliminary for Schools and B2 First for Schools.

Note that in the box above there is an option for learners with dyslexia to have the modified large print (MLP) version of the question paper with clutter removed, to make the page less cluttered and allow larger and standardised fonts to appear. You can discover more about modified large print and download papers on cambridgeenglish.org/prepare/requirements. It is still a good idea to use images in the classroom to practice vocabulary and generate ideas. The following activities contain ideas which use visuals in class.

Or you could use pictures of objects or gestures to check understanding. With **multisensory** input and practice, learners can more than one sense at a time and so the brain is stimulated in a variety of ways. **Multisensory** activities may include a combination of reading, listening, viewing, touching an object, moving physically around the space or using gestures.

Pages 13 to 27 describe comprehensive lesson plans to support learners with dyslexia in preparing for different parts of our qualifications.

Key terminology

Inclusivity

'Inclusion is a sense of belonging; feeling respected, valued for who you are; feeling a level of supportive energy and commitment from others so that you can do your best work.'

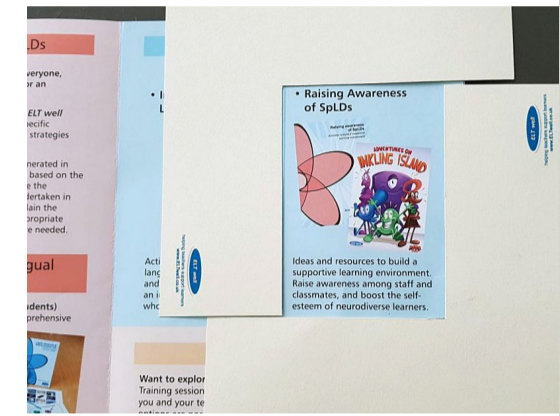
Miller and Katz (2002)¹

Developing inclusive learning environments

Create a supportive and collaborative classroom culture by getting to know all of your learners as individuals and encouraging them to get to know each other. This will help learners feel comfortable reflecting on task approaches and asking for support.

Give learners opportunities to work in different groupings and encourage **peer assessment** so that learners get used to supporting each other.

Have L-shaped cards available for learners to frame sections of overcrowded textbook pages and help focus their attention. Encourage learners to use a plain piece of paper to cover reading texts and reveal one line at a time as they read. These are useful techniques for all learners when you are teaching reading skills.



Offer learners choices in how they engage with tasks to make learning more meaningful and **inclusive**. For example, learners might 'draw' rather than write notes during a listening task or while preparing for a speaking task. The **Listening activity** helps you practise this.

Encourage learners to reflect on their learning processes and discuss how they approached a task or reached a particular answer.

Allocate time to explicitly teach exam strategies, such as how to approach particular tasks in the exam, and break these down into a series of simple steps.

Key terminology

Peer assessment is when learners give each other feedback on their language, work, learning strategies or performance. Research shows that learners who are similar to each other in age, gender, first language and learning goals provide motivating role models for each other.

★ Top tip: see Activities

Handouts

- Give any printed handouts to learners on pastel-coloured paper to support learners with visual processing difficulties.
- Make sure written handouts are clear and dyslexic-friendly.
- Try to make sure that sentences don't 'run over' onto the next line.
- Use larger fonts without serifs, double spacing between lines, and with an extra line space between paragraphs.

For example:

- ✓ Arial is a font without serifs and is easier to read.
- ✗ Times New Roman has serifs (small, extra lines on letters), so it can be difficult to read.



Assessment and feedback

★ Top tips

- Assessment isn't just about correcting mistakes, but is a process which involves gathering information in order to identify where a learner might need additional support or practice.
- Adopting different approaches to feedback is particularly helpful. Hearing the teacher's voice can feel more personal and supportive than receiving written feedback in red pen. You could make a short video or voice recording with your comments.
- **Formative assessment** is about learning from feedback. It's not necessary to identify every mistake a learner makes. This can take a lot of time for you and give your learners the impression that they never do anything right! Just as we don't try to teach every grammar point in one lesson, we shouldn't try to develop every aspect of language every time we give feedback. Be selective about the mistakes you correct, focusing on words that are easily confused and relationships between spelling and phonology.
- In the classroom, assessment isn't the end of the learning process. If you give something back to a learner to correct, remember to check the next version and then give them feedback on this too. The challenges that learners with dyslexia experience in learning often lead to low levels of confidence. Ensure you include positive aspects in feedback to encourage learners and build self-esteem.
- Feedback is very personal. Talk to learners about what feedback they appreciate and work together to find what works best for them.

📖 Key terminology

Formative assessment is when a teacher gives learners feedback on their progress during a course, rather than at the end of it, so that the learners can learn from the feedback.



Planning inclusive lessons

All learners can become overwhelmed by tasks and activities that require them to think about lots of different things at once, and this applies to learners with dyslexia too. You may be familiar with many of these suggestions, as they benefit all learners, but they are especially supportive for learners with dyslexia.

- ✓ Present new language in small and manageable chunks so as not to overload learners, and focus on key and core language from the exam **wordlists**.
- ✓ Regularly check in with your learners by using **concept-checking questions** to assess their understanding.
- ✓ Try to use **multisensory** input and activities to give learners more than one way to make connections and learn concepts. For example, use flash cards, puppets, story videos and real objects in the classroom. The **Speaking activity** has a good example of this.
- ✓ You can also use music and rhythm to highlight and practise pronunciation features, such as word and sentence stress.
- ✓ Try to use audio recordings, illustrations, pictures or mind maps to accompany written texts, or where appropriate, encourage learners to create their own.
- ✓ Offer lots of opportunities for learners to recap and review material, especially from the **A2 and B1 wordlists**.
- ✓ Use varied techniques to help learners memorise new words, including drawing, music or rhythm, movement, gesture and visualisation techniques.
- ✓ Include explicit explanations of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation features, as these are often more accessible for learners with dyslexia.

Key terminology

Concept-Checking Questions (CCQs) are designed to check or support a learner's understanding of a new word or grammatical item, and offer more reliable insight than just asking 'Do you understand?'. Example CCQs for the adjective *quick* might be: 'What things do you know that are quick?', 'What's the opposite of quick?' or 'Are snails quick?'.

Or you could use pictures of objects or gestures to check understanding. With **multisensory** input and practice, learners use more than one sense at a time and so the brain is stimulated in a variety of ways. Multisensory activities may involve a combination of reading, listening, viewing, touching an object, moving physically around the space, or using gesture.

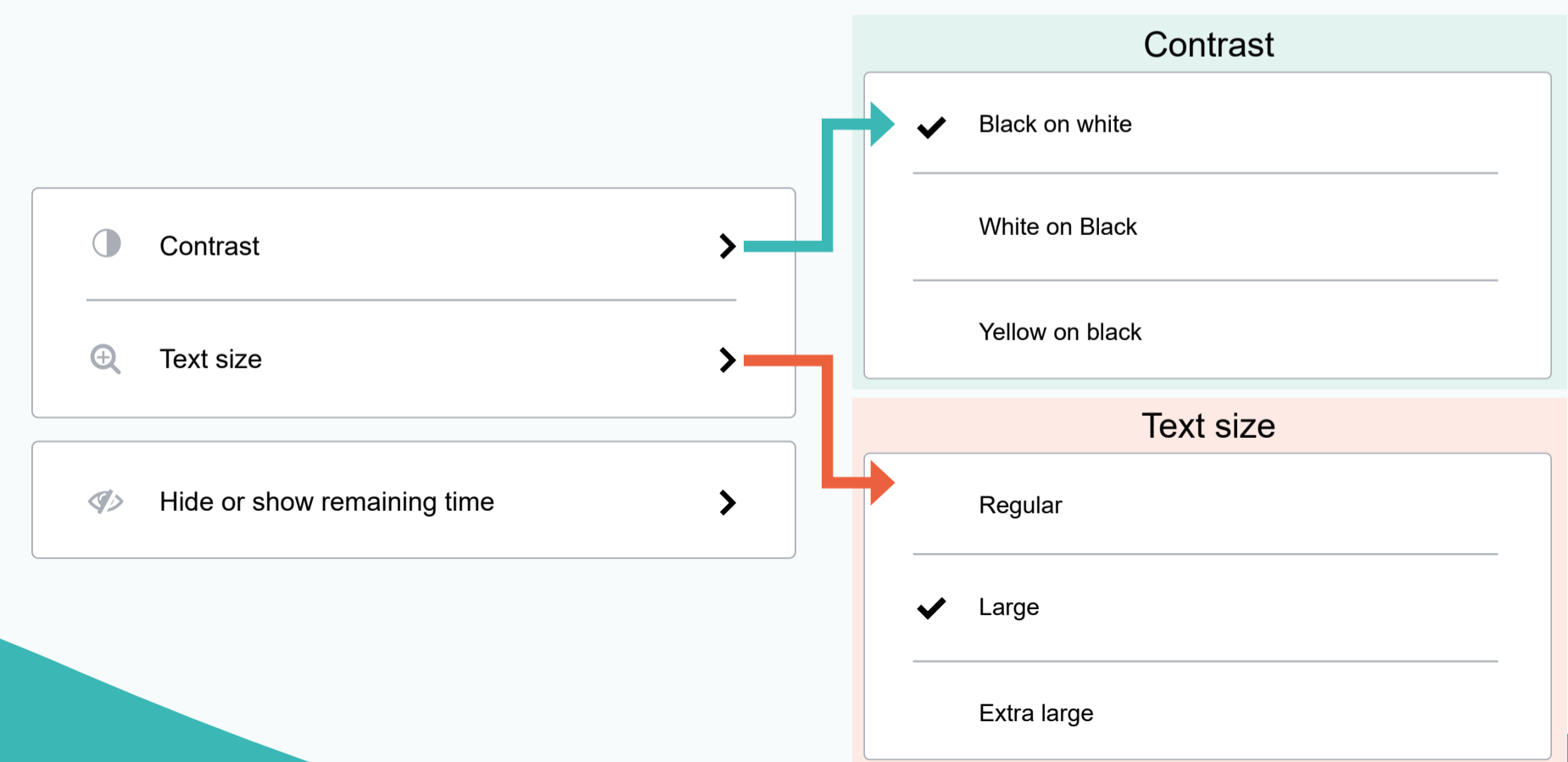
Activities

Preparing learners with dyslexia for Cambridge English Qualifications

With the need for **inclusivity** in creating a successful learning environment for all learners, here are some lesson plans for helping your learners prepare for A2 Key for Schools, B1 Preliminary for Schools and B2 First for Schools.

Note that in the live exam there is an option for learners with dyslexia to have the modified large print (MLP) version of the question paper with drawings removed, to make the page less cluttered and allow larger and standardised fonts in a paper. You can discover more about modified large print and download papers at cambridgeenglish.org/help/special-requirements. It is still a good idea to use images in the classroom to practise vocabulary and generate ideas. The following activities contain ideas which use visuals in class.

Learners might also choose to take digital tests where they use the keyboard instead of writing by hand and where they can adjust settings such as text size, contrast and volume. You can find more information about the digital exam and digital practice tests on our website, cambridgeenglish.org/qualifications-digital, and read common **questions and answers** with a guide on how to change settings in the digital test.



Preparing for the Reading paper

Activity 1: Reading

Aims

This lesson supports learners with dyslexia in preparing for the Reading paper by:

- building confidence by activating word knowledge prior to reading
- practising explicit reading strategies such as reading for meaning and gist comprehension
- supporting learners in decoding written words with audio support by reading the text aloud.

Preparation

1. Download a sample Reading paper for the exam from our website.

A2 Key for Schools: Reading and Writing Part 4

B1 Preliminary for Schools: Reading Part 5

B2 First for Schools: Reading and Use of English Part 1

2. Download the **attached printout** for the pre-learning activity table.

Pre-learning

Depending on how much time you have available in the lesson, you might want to set this task for homework. Explain to learners that they will need their answers to complete an exam task in the next class.

1. Select the multiple-choice cloze text you will work on with the learners. From the six or eight multiple-choice questions under the text, give each learner one row of words to learn so that each learner learns four words in total, one from each of the columns A to D. Give learners a blank copy of the attached table to complete (the copy below includes example B2 words). Giving learners the opportunity to look at key vocabulary for the lesson will help build their confidence. Allowing time for learners to think about the vocabulary without time pressures results in more effective vocabulary development.

Word	Part of speech	Meaning	Typical combinations ('collocations')
research	noun	The study of a subject to discover new information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out/do research into language development • a research project
research	verb	To study a subject in detail in order to discover new information about it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He spent several years researching African languages. • She is researching for her English essay.

If some words can be both a noun and a verb, encourage learners to write both entries. This activity is about helping learners to become familiar with the word itself rather than finding a fixed definition or correct answer. **See Adaptation 1.**

Activity 1: Reading

1. Once learners have completed their tables, ask them to work together in pairs to share **one** word that they learned and its meaning.
2. Monitor the above stage closely so that when doing whole-class feedback, you can ask one of the learners whose answer was correct to give you the answer. Be sensitive when getting feedback; some learners may not feel comfortable speaking aloud and may learn a lot from hearing others talk.
3. When checking the answers, ask questions that stretch and challenge learners, but also ensure understanding. Questions you could ask are:
 - Did anyone learn a new word? What does that word mean?
 - What did you notice about the types of words? Were they all verbs, nouns or adjectives?
 - Were there any words that sounded similar or were spelled similarly?

Familiarisation with the text

Give learners the text. Think carefully about the **layout of the text**, making sure learners can access the text and learn vocabulary.

1. Read the text to learners and ask them at this point to just listen and read along. This is so that the text can become familiar. For some learners, following a text as you read can be quite challenging. Don't rush through the text. Pause to allow learners to catch up and to get an overall sense of the meaning.
2. Now tell learners that they are going to work on the text again, but this time in groups. Put students in small groups of mixed abilities. Give each learner a specific task, for example, one learner can read one line out loud, another can read the next line etc. You could give a learner with dyslexia the task of underlining any unknown words, so that they have an active role in the group. **See Adaptation 2.**
3. Now read the text aloud again, but this time, at the end of each sentence or each paragraph, pause and use questioning techniques to make sure everyone understands the text. Questions you might want to ask are:
 - What is this paragraph/sentence about?
 - Which people/groups of people are mentioned in this paragraph?
 - Which words were interesting and why? (At this point, if no one offers anything, you could draw attention to words which you think may have been a challenge.)
 - What surprised you in this sentence/paragraph/text?

Adaptation 1

For some learners, writing in a table may be a challenge. This is not a writing task. If your learners can record their responses and send the audio files to you, or create a mind map of their responses, then this will allow them to achieve the same outcome.

Adaptation 2

Instead of asking learners to underline unknown words, ask them to underline the words that they do know. This will increase their confidence if they see how much they can understand.

Activity 1: Reading

Exam task

1. Still in small groups, give learners all the questions with the multiple-choice options (A–D). Ask learners to share their definitions of words A–D from the pre-learning task. Take time to read each word, sounding it out slowly to allow learners to get used to the syllables. You can allow learners to read some of the words aloud but avoid forcing anyone to speak.

If you record learners' definitions on the board, be aware that for learners with dyslexia, moving from their book to the board can be challenging. If you do write on the board, be conscious of your handwriting, don't write too much, and read aloud what you've written.
2. Tell learners that you are going to read the text again, line by line, and try to fill in the blanks together. At this point, learners have researched four words and will have heard other learners' responses on other words. This should make learners feel more confident with the text itself. Go through one example yourself, by reading each sentence, and when you come to the first blank, go through each word in that line to see if it fits. Again, use questioning techniques to help learners develop confidence in selecting the right word. For example:
 - Are we looking for a noun, verb or adjective here? Why?
 - Is there a word that you would not choose? Why?
 - Are there words before or after the gap that collocate/combine with any of the options?
3. In their groups, ask learners to complete the rest of the sentences using the above technique. When everyone has completed the task, give learners a completed text and ask them to self-correct. Monitor to see if there are any answers which you will need to correct or explain.

Follow-up/Homework

To assess whether all learners have understood the words they were given and can now use them in other contexts, ask learners to go back to the table in the pre-learning stage and:

- add synonyms or antonyms for each word
- choose one of the words they learned and use it in a sentence
- write the definition of one of the words they learned for homework.



Preparing for the Writing paper

Activity 2: Writing

Aims

This lesson supports learners with dyslexia in preparing for the Writing paper by:

- activating the language needed for a writing task by identifying useful words and linguistic structures
- helping them focus on organisational and structural features of writing
- generating content without feeling held back by technical challenges.

Preparation

Download a sample Writing paper for the exam from our website.

A2 Key for Schools: Writing Part 6

B1 Preliminary for Schools: Writing Part 1 or 2

B2 First for Schools: Writing Part 1 or 2

Introducing the writing task


Make a printed copy of the question from the Writing paper for each learner and read the question aloud. Use **concept-checking questions** to ensure that learners understand the writing question and task instructions.

Activating language

1. Ask learners in pairs to look at the question and highlight or circle the key words in the task instructions. Feed back as a whole group, ensuring learners have chosen the key words, and asking them to explain why they've chosen them.
2. Explain that based on the key words, learners are going to brainstorm words and phrases that might be useful for the task, and organise their ideas in a mind map. Demonstrate on the board by writing the key word(s) in a circle in the centre of the board. Remember to write clearly and slowly, to support learners with dyslexia in following the task instructions. Elicit a few words or phrases that might be useful for the writing task, and write these in 'bubbles' around the central circle, making connections as you build a mind map example on the board. To make the task more inclusive, for some of the words you add to the board, also draw a small picture or doodle to represent the word.
3. Now explain that learners should make their own mind map. Give them the choice between writing phrases, drawing pictures to represent them, or a combination of the two.

Activity 2: Writing

Planning writing

1. Explain to the class that learners are going to make a visual plan of what their written text will look like. 
Draw a picture of a road on the board. Give each learner a large piece of paper and ask them to draw a road on the paper. Learners with dyslexia often find the organisational features of writing challenging when producing a written text. Allowing them to plan their writing in a visual way helps them to use their creative, imaginative and practical skills to support their planning and organisation.
2. Read the task question again to focus learners' attention. Explain that learners are going to make notes of their ideas and organise these on their road map. Explain that the beginning of the road will be their introduction, the end of the road will be their conclusion, and they can have several 'stops' in-between. Before learners start, give them sticky notes on which to write or draw their ideas, and demonstrate that they should stick these notes to their map, thinking about where along the road their ideas would work best.

Reviewing the plan

Now that learners have their road map, ask them to show it to a partner and describe the plan they have made. At this point, learners can move their sticky notes around if they want to reorganise any of their ideas. Monitor closely, support learners with language, and make a note of any spelling issues.

Spelling focus

1. Now explain that you are going to spend a short time focusing on spelling. Ask each learner, or pair of learners, to look at their notes and identify one or two words which they need help to spell. Elicit answers from each learner (or pair) in turn, and write the word clearly on the board between two lines, saying each letter aloud as you write.
2. Explain that the letters that go above the line (l, in this example), have 'heads', and that letters that go below the line (p and g, in this example), have 'tails'.



spelling

Ask learners to tell you which other letters in the alphabet have heads/tails. Encourage learners to notice details about the spelling, by asking:

- How many letters are there? • How many heads are there? • How many tails are there?

Give learners lined paper, and ask them to practise writing the word between the lines.

For words that are particularly difficult to spell, try to think of a **mnemonic** to help learners remember the correct spelling, and write it clearly on the board.

Activity 2: Writing

Writing

Now ask learners to return to their road map plan, and give them a set time to write their answer to the exam question. Learners with dyslexia often find it easier to process information on pastel-coloured paper. If possible, give them pastel-coloured paper to write their answer on, with the task question printed clearly in a large font at the top of the paper.

Reflection

After they have finished writing, ask learners to reflect on what they found easy and challenging about the task. This will help you to identify where learners need more support with this type of writing task.

Feedback

Take some time to review each learner's writing after they have finished. Remember you don't need to correct every mistake, as this can make learners feel discouraged. Try to be encouraging, and focus on mistakes that affect comprehension. See the section called **Assessment and feedback** for more tips on correcting learners' work. Be sure to make time in the next lesson for learners to look at or hear their feedback, and help them identify ways of improving their work.

★ Top tip

To help learners feel more comfortable asking for support from the teacher, cut out circles of green, yellow and red card for each member of the class. Explain to learners that they should keep their circles on their desk. Explain the meaning of the different colour circles, and that learners should keep their circles in a pile with the relevant colour on top:

RED I need help with this task and I can't do any more without help.

YELLOW I need help but I can do a different part of the task while I wait.

GREEN I'm OK and I don't need help with the task.

📖 Key terminology

A **mnemonic** is a short poem, phrase or word used to help a person remember something.

In spelling the word *accommodation*, for example, the mnemonic 'the best accommodation has two double beds' helps learners remember that *accommodation* has two of the letter 'c' and two of the letter 'm'.

In spelling the word *because*, the mnemonic '**B**ig **E**lephants **C**an **A**lways **U**nderstand **S**mall **E**lephants' helps learners remember the spelling.



Preparing for the Listening paper

Activity 3: Listening

Aims

This lesson supports learners with dyslexia in preparing for the Listening paper by:

- offering choices about how learners make notes and removing the linguistic element of note-taking
- focusing their attention on key words in multiple-choice questions, and activating language they might hear in the listening task
- integrating activities to support phonological processing and help learners distinguish between similar sounds.

Preparation

Download a sample Listening paper for the exam from our website.

A2 Key for Schools: Listening Part 3 or 4

B1 Preliminary for Schools: Listening Part 2 or 4

B2 First for Schools: Listening Part 1 or 4

Warmer

1. Choose one of the audio tracks from the relevant part of the Listening paper (see the Preparation stage above) and write the topic in large letters on the board. In the example below, for example, you might write 'class' or 'lessons':

You will hear a teacher talking to her class.

What does the teacher want her class to do?

2. To engage learners and help activate vocabulary related to the topic, ask a few questions, such as 'What do you like about class?', 'What don't you like?' or 'Talk about one of your favourite classes – what happened?'. Elicit answers from the class. Encouraging learners to get to know each other more by listening to each other's personal opinions and preferences can help create a supportive and collaborative classroom culture.

Introducing the task

Give learners a printed copy of the first question. Read the question aloud. Ask some concept-checking questions to make sure that learners have understood the question and the task.

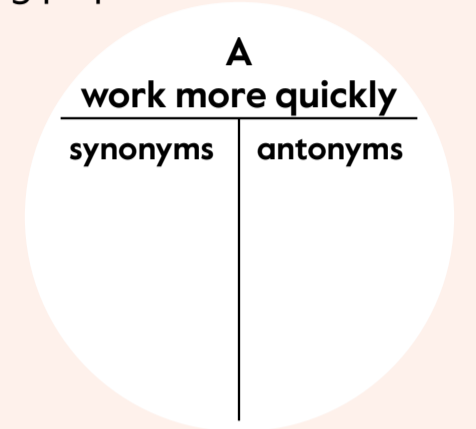
Activity 3: Listening

Listening preparation

1. This example question is from Part 4 of the A2 Key for Schools Listening paper:

You will hear a teacher talking to her class.

What does the teacher want her class to do?

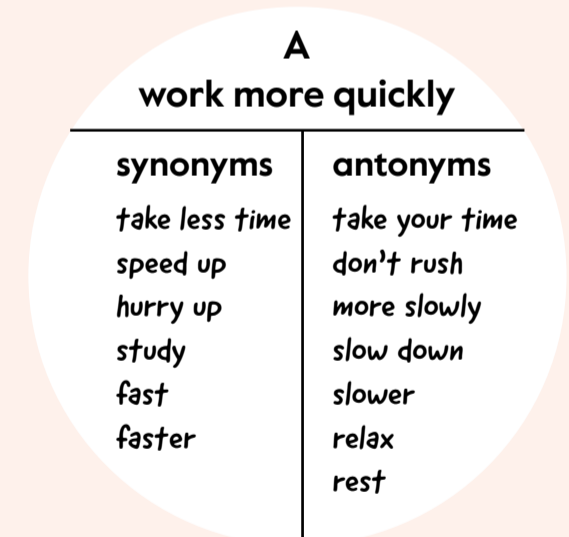


2. Draw three circles and write the three multiple-choice options at the top, with two columns below as shown in this example. Give each learner a copy of the three circles, one for A, B and C options printed on large paper. A template is attached for you to print out.

A work more quickly **B** make less noise **C** help each other more

3. Elicit or explain the terms 'synonym' and 'antonym', or use 'similar' and 'different' if you prefer. Start by demonstrating the task using circle A. Ask the class to give you examples of synonyms and antonyms connected to the phrase. As they offer examples, show them where to write their ideas in the two columns inside the first circle. Remember that some learners will need support with spelling or writing down what they hear.

Sample answers



4. Some learners may find it challenging to retain information such as instructions in the working memory, so to check that learners have understood and can remember the task, elicit the task steps from the group and write these on the board as you repeat them. Remember to speak slowly, and pause to allow learners time to process and keep up.
5. Once you are confident that learners understand the task, ask them to work together in pairs to go through the same process with circles **B** and **C**, writing their synonyms and antonyms in the relevant column of each circle. To make the task more meaningful and inclusive, offer learners the choice of writing or drawing pictures of their words. You might also want to pair learners with dyslexia with other learners who can act as mentors during the task. During the task, monitor closely, paying particular attention to learners' spelling, and supporting as necessary.
6. Once pairs have brainstormed ideas for circles **B** and **C**, ask them to walk around and look at their classmates' ideas. Give learners the opportunity to add to their own diagrams if they like. Allowing learners to move around changes the pace of the lesson and helps to maintain engagement, especially for learners who might be easily distracted.

Activity 3: Listening

Focus on pronunciation

Learners with dyslexia frequently struggle with phonological processing and will benefit from extra support with sound–spelling relationships. Nominate a more confident pair to read out some of their words/phrases, one by one. After each word/phrase, check the pronunciation and ask the class to repeat the word. Give each learner a printed copy of the following questions, and read the questions aloud:

- How many words are there?
- How many syllables are there?
- How many sounds (phonemes) are there?
- Can you think of another word that sounds similar?
- Which sounds are different?

Elicit answers from the class and encourage learners to practise the sounds and words/phrases. Make the activity multisensory by drawing their attention to the shape of the mouth to help them make the sounds.

Listening task

1. Tell the class that they will hear the first part of the listening task. To focus attention, ask them to close their eyes while they listen, and get a feel of the general meaning. Play the first part of the recording, and then ask learners to share what they can remember. Make the task more inclusive by giving learners the option of talking to their partner, writing notes, or drawing a picture of what they have understood.
2. Now tell the class that they will hear the recording again, and that they should try to choose the correct answer, A, B or C. After playing the recording again, ask learners to share their answers with a partner, and to explain what they heard that made them choose that answer. Play the listening a third time, and check the answers as a whole class. Make a note of any words that caused confusion.
3. Repeat steps 1–5 in the **Listening preparation** section with the remaining questions, gradually shortening the time limit of each step.

Activity 3: Listening

Post-listening language review

1. Finally, choose five key words from the listening transcript, focusing on words that learners may have confused or misunderstood during the listening task. Write the words clearly on the board and read them aloud slowly. Use concept-checking questions to make sure learners have understood the words.
2. Explain that learners are going to make their own flash cards to review key vocabulary, and demonstrate with the first word. Write the word on one side of a blank piece of card and invite ideas from the group for a picture that might represent the word. Choose one, quickly draw it on the other side of the card.
3. Now ask learners to make their own flash cards using the vocabulary written on the board. Check that learners understand the task, and as they make their cards, support with spelling, pronunciation and ideas for pictures. If you're short on time, you could set this task for homework.

Follow-on

1. Use the cards at the end of the lesson or the beginning of the next lesson to review the vocabulary. Use your own flash cards of the vocabulary, or collect some that learners have made and use these to demonstrate the activity. Hold up each picture in turn and ask learners to recall the word, checking their pronunciation and eliciting the correct spelling.
2. Once you have demonstrated the task, have learners play in pairs. For higher level learners, make the task more challenging by asking them to make a sentence containing the word on the card. To make learning more meaningful, encourage them to make sentences that are true for them.

Preparing for the Speaking paper

Activity 4: Speaking

Aims

This lesson supports learners with dyslexia in preparing for the Speaking paper by:

- using visual organisers to review words and grammatical structures appropriate to the speaking topics
- offering supported practice with time for learners to prepare what they want to say before having to say it, and time to reflect on the task afterwards
- giving extra attention to pronunciation features of language.

Preparation

Download a sample Speaking paper for the exam from our website.

A2 Key for Schools: Speaking Part 2

B1 Preliminary for Schools: Speaking Part 3

B2 First for Schools: Speaking Part 2

Topic familiarisation

1. Display the pictures from the speaking task in the classroom and invite learners to walk around and look at the pictures.
2. Put learners into pairs and give each pair a set of sticky notes. Allocate a specific picture to each pair, and ask them to write on each sticky note a word or phrase connected to what they can see in the picture. They should then stick their notes next to or around the picture. Giving learners sticky notes to use makes the task more multisensory, helping to stimulate the brain as learners engage physically as well as cognitively. Monitor and support with spelling.
3. Now ask pairs to walk around the room looking at the other pictures and what their classmates have written. Monitor and support with reading, paying special attention to pronunciation. Learners with dyslexia often struggle with phonological awareness, so support them by pointing at the letters as you say the sounds in each word. See Adaptation.
4. Invite pairs to add further sticky notes with words and phrases to the other pictures.

Adaptation

Instead of learners walking around and reading what others have written on their sticky notes, invite each pair to 'present' their words and phrases while the rest of the class gather around the relevant picture to look and listen.

Activity 4: Speaking

Speaking preparation

1. Print a copy of these questions for each learner and read the questions aloud:

What is similar about the pictures?

How are they different?

2. Use questioning strategies to support learners' information processing and ensure that they understand the questions, such as:
 - Can you give me an example of two things that are similar?
 - Can you give me an example of two things that are different?
3. Give each pair of learners a printout of all the pictures, and ask them to discuss the questions together. To make the task more inclusive, tell them they can highlight, circle, or colour parts of the picture to show similarities and differences.

Speaking task

Make a printed copy of the question from the speaking task for each learner, printed in the middle of the page, and read the question aloud. Give learners a short time to look at the pictures and think about the question. Offer them the choice of making notes in a mind map around the question in the middle of the paper, or drawing their ideas. Then give learners a set time to look at the pictures and discuss the questions together in pairs. See Extension.

Reflection

After pairs have discussed the question together, ask them to think about the conversation they had and try to recall some of what they said. Invite learners to share some of what they said with the class, and write phrases and sentences on the board, eliciting corrections for any mistakes with grammar, vocabulary or pronunciation. Remember that learners with dyslexia may feel less confident speaking in front of the class. When they do contribute, give positive and reassuring feedback to help boost their self-esteem.

Extension

Invite learners to use their phones to record their conversations. This way they can listen back to the recording and evaluate how well they feel they completed the speaking task.

Learners with a disability or special requirements

We have a number of ways to help people taking our exams who need special arrangements due to temporary or long-term difficulties or conditions. For example, special arrangements might be available for learners who have a specific learning difficulty, such as dyslexia.

Special Requirements – guidance notes for teachers

Guidance Notes for Special Requirements give teachers useful information about the different Special Requirements versions available for Cambridge English Qualifications. They contain a description of how materials are adapted for different special requirement needs, along with examples demonstrating what materials might look like, useful information about special arrangements for taking the exams, and FAQs. We can also provide a range of modified materials for learners with special requirements.

For more information on how we can help learners with special requirements, visit cambridgeenglish.org/help/special-requirements.



Extra resources

Lesson plans and resources for teachers

- **Free resources** for preparing learners for Cambridge English Qualifications.
- **Write & Improve** is a great tool to give learners instant feedback on their writing, for A2 Key, B1 Preliminary levels and above, to help them revise and improve what they've written.
- **A style guide** like this one from the British Dyslexia Association can help ensure that written material considers the difficulties experienced by some dyslexic people and allows for the use of text to speech to facilitate ease of reading.

Blog posts related to dyslexia, SpLDs and inclusivity

- **Supporting students** with specific learning difficulties in language learning.
- **Supporting learners** with Specific Learning Difficulties.
- **Ten top approaches** to inclusive teaching and learning.

Learn more about research into second language learning

Cambridge University Press has published over **20 free and easy-to-read research papers** about second language learning and teaching. Some papers which are especially relevant to this guide are:

- **Specific Learning Difficulties in ELT**
- **Giving feedback to language learners**
- **Creating a Safe Speaking Environment**
- **Motivational aspects of using near-peers as role models.**

References

1. Miller, F A, & Katz, J H (2002) *The inclusion breakthrough: Unleashing the real power of diversity*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

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