



Dyslexia in the workplace

Tips on how to help your dyslexic staff reach their potential



Te Pūkenga

Supporting staff with dyslexia

Did you know that one in 10 workers in New Zealand is dyslexic?

There is a good chance that someone in your workplace has dyslexia. By giving them the right support, you can help them thrive and succeed.

EarnLearn | Te Pūkenga is committed to providing support for people with dyslexia. This booklet will help you understand what dyslexia is and how dyslexic staff can be supported in the workplace.

If you have questions regarding supporting staff with dyslexia, please contact our Learner Support team at literacy@earnlearn.ac.nz or phone **0800 EARN IT (0800 327 648)**.

More information and tips are available at dyslexiafoundation.org.nz.

Contact us

Have any questions? We've got you covered.

Call us: 0800 327 648 (0800 EARN IT)
Mon–Thurs, 7am–6pm Fri 7am–5pm

Email: support@earnlearn.ac.nz

Website: earnlearn.ac.nz

What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a difficulty in learning to read or interpret words, letters, and other symbols. It does not affect general intelligence. In fact, many of the world's most creative people are dyslexic. They do not achieve success 'in spite of' their dyslexia – rather, they achieve because of it.

Some creative and high-achieving New Zealanders with dyslexia include: John Britten (Britten Motorcycle), Sir Richard Taylor (Weta Workshops), Sir Peter Leitch (the Mad Butcher), and Michael Van de Elsen (celebrity chef).

Key facts

- One in 10 Kiwis in the workforce is dyslexic.
- Dyslexia is regarded as a difference, not a disability.
- People with dyslexia have a different way of processing information.
- Many dyslexic people don't know they have the condition. Steven Spielberg didn't know until he was 60 years old.





Dyslexia can show itself in a variety of ways, and no two people with dyslexia will have the same set of characteristics.



Levels of dyslexia range from mild to severe.



Early life experiences will shape the combination of characteristics that dyslexic people show.



People with dyslexia will adopt strategies to deal with these characteristics. They may learn to hide them.

People with dyslexia might:

- Have difficulties in reading, writing, and spelling.
- Show a significant difference between their ability to do a job and their ability in tests and assessments. For example, they may be very good at their practical work, but perform poorly in related tests.
- Be reluctant to read or write anything in public. If they do read, they often miss out the small joining words.
- Get someone else to do anything that requires writing. They will often have excuses, such as “I don’t have my glasses with me”.
- Have difficulty remembering verbal instructions or directions.
- Struggle with time management or organisation skills.
- Shy away from seeking or accepting a promotion.
- Decline positions where reading and writing are a key element.
- Be reluctant to go on training courses or participate in meetings.
- Have low self-esteem as a result of earlier lack of success in learning situations.
- Be impatient with formal meetings and regularly jump straight to the answer of a complex problem.
- Confuse right and left-hand side. Many people with dyslexia are ambidextrous.
- Have limited short-term memory, but excellent long-term memory.
- Struggle in open-plan offices and become easily distracted.
- Have left school early.
- Take a long time to complete tasks, even though they may be trying really hard.
- Prefer face-to-face meetings and phone calls rather than written text.



Empowering people with dyslexia

Many people with dyslexia have faced failure at school. As adults, they don't want to risk looking like a failure in front of their colleagues, so they don't have the confidence to apply for jobs they are capable of.

However, there is a reason why so many dyslexic people are successful.

Global research has shown that dyslexic people often demonstrate superior talents in certain areas, such as:

- Strong spatial, visual, and 3D skills.
- Innovative, creative, out-of-the-box type thinking. Dyslexic people can often jump straight to the best solution.
- Not getting bogged down with details, and able to see the big picture.
- Being very intuitive and empathetic, with a high level of emotional intelligence.
- Great verbal communication skills.
- Strong collaborative and co-operative skills, which makes them great team members.
- The ability to see patterns, connections, and similarities that others cannot see.

No two dyslexic people are the same.

Each person will have their own individual challenges, and each will have their own combination of advantages.

With the right support, dyslexic employees can be a wonderful asset to your organisation.





How you can support dyslexic employees

Supporting your dyslexic employees is easy. Just remember that most dyslexic people learn best through hands-on experience. That could be demonstrations, experimentation, observation, and visual aids.

To help your dyslexic staff flourish in your workplace, try incorporating some of these methods:

- Provide digital tools. Screen readers, voice recognition software, voice-to-text software, read back scanners, and apps can assist people with dyslexia.
- Give one instruction at a time.
- Organise written information into chunks so it is easier to digest.
- Lay out detailed tasks as step-by-step instructions.
- Provide a GPS for workers who travel a lot.
- Use visual strategies, such as mind or concept mapping, to illustrate daily tasks.
- Use diagrams, images, and other visual tools in notices to break up the text.
- Let them work in teams or in pairs – for example, start a buddy system.
- Allow extra time to complete reading or written tasks.
- Provide administrative support or a proof reader.



Te Pūkenga

earnlearn.ac.nz

0800 327 648 (EARN IT)