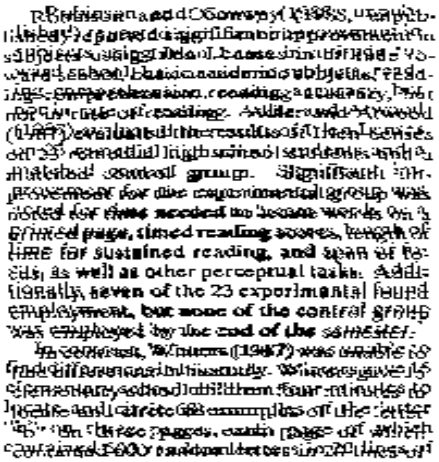
Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome/Irlen Syndrome is not a learning disability. It is a complex and variable condition that can sometimes co-exist with learning difficulties or a learning disability.

Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome, also known as Irlen Syndrome, is described as a visual-perceptual problem that exists independently of any optical deficits. The source of the problem is linked to the encoding and decoding of visual information by the nervous system.

It is a visual-perceptual processing dysfunction which causes problems with reading, study and writing/spelling. It has been related to a retinal-sensory after-imaging effect, possibly associated with the magnocellular visual pathway, which may cause an overlapping of letters and words between consecutive eye fixations when reading or writing.

Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome cannot be detected by standard visual, educational and medical tests. It may also be detected in addition to the need for corrective prescription lenses.

Example of difficulties experienced with print.



Irlen Lenses

Helen Irlen, an Educational Psychologist, first identified Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome/Irlen Syndrome in 1981 whilst working with undergraduate students with reading and learning disabilities. She observed that a number of the students significantly improvement in their reading ability when coloured plastic overlays were placed over printed material.

The coloured overlay or filters are reported to minimise print distortions when an individual reads and writes.
Irlen lenses may therefore improve reading comfort, speed, comprehension and duration, and reduce strain, fatigue, migraine, headaches and glare.

Irlen lenses may improve visual perception but it does **not** develop or improve spelling, grammar, or knowledge. These deficits in learning need to be attended to by individual tutoring.