

# Study Strategies for Students with Dyslexia

by Lois MacCullagh

This resource was compiled from ideas provided by students with dyslexia and other students from Macquarie University in a research study conducted in 2013 and 2014.

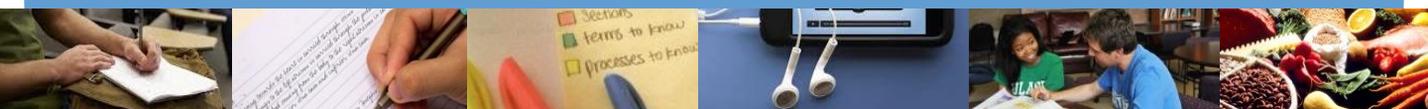
The study was supported by the School of Education, ARC Centre for Excellence in Cognition and its Disorders and the Macquarie University Disability Service.

Please note that if you are printing copies of this resource, people with dyslexia are likely to find it easier to read when printed in colour.

“An idea shared is an idea multiplied”



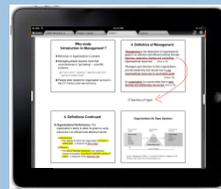
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# Note taking strategies

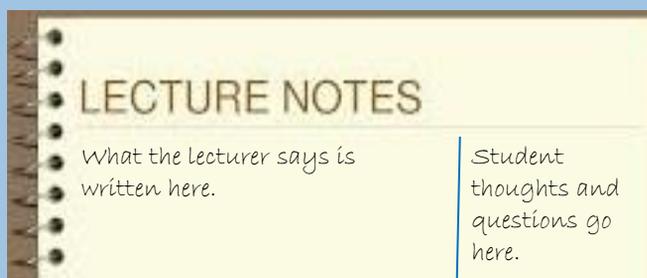
## Take lecture slides with you to the lecture

Lots of students printed out their lecture slides and took them to the lecture to write notes on. Some also downloaded them to a laptop or tablet and added notes to them electronically. Of course, this is only possible if your lecturer makes the slides available online before lectures.



## Divide note-taking pages into two sections

Some students like to divide their notebook pages into columns - one for what the lecturer says and one for their own thoughts and questions. Another variation of this technique is to rule off a section at the bottom of the page to write a summary.



## Write in boxes

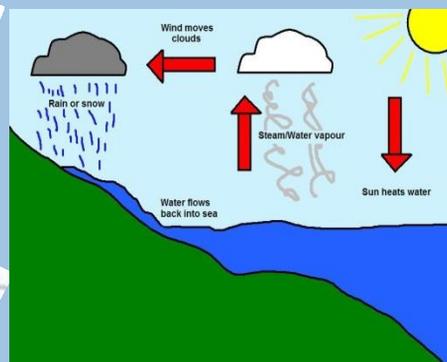
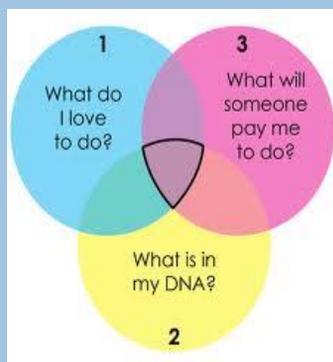
One student found it helps to write notes with each idea in a box and joining them with arrows.



## Draw pictures, graphs and diagrams

Many students draw pictures, graphs and diagrams in their notes.

Some drew the pictures during the lecture. Most re-write their notes afterwards using pictures.



# Note taking strategies (cont.)

## Organise a note taker EARLY

You may be eligible for a note taker from the university disability service.

If you wish to use this service, it is important to make your booking EARLY (i.e. up to 6 weeks in advance) to allow enough time to make the arrangements.



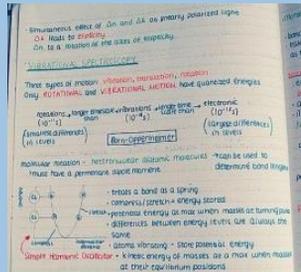
## OneNote and AudioNote

Microsoft OneNote (for Windows) and Luminant's AudioNote app (for iPad) can voice record lectures while you take notes. The audio recording will be time stamped to correspond with your notes so you can re-listen to specific sections that you may have missed or misunderstood.



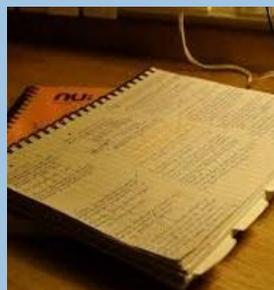
## Re-write or type lecture notes neatly

Many students re-write or type their lecture notes neatly after the lecture. This helps them revise what the lecturer said and means they have neat notes to revise from later.



## Keep lecture notes organised

Find a way to organise your lecture notes that works for you. Examples include divided note books, plastic display folders, regular folders and on a computer.



# Reading and writing strategies

## Fonts

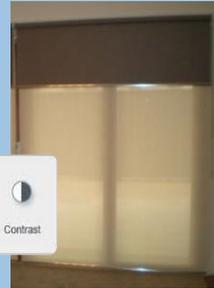
Some students find certain fonts easier to read than others. You may wish to try a few and see what works best for you. 'Sans serif' fonts may be easier than 'serif' ones.

Verdana, Calibri, Comic Sans and other easy to read fonts come standard on most computers

Dyslexie and Open Dyslexie can be downloaded free here <http://opendyslexic.org/> or here <http://www.dyslexiefont.com/>

## Reduce glare

Close blinds partly or fully  
Reduce computer screen brightness and glare  
Use coloured paper and backgrounds for printed and electronic documents and presentations.



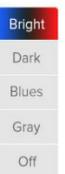
## BeeLine reader

Beeline reader colours the starts and ends of lines of text for easier scanning from one line to the next. It comes as an app or a web plugin, free from [www.beelinereader.com](http://www.beelinereader.com)



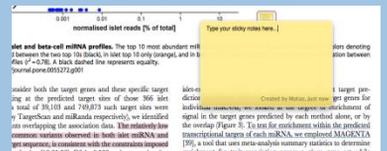
### HOW IT WORKS

Ever wonder why stop lights use colors and not words? It's because the human brain processes color very quickly —much more quickly than it can process words. BeeLine Reader uses the same principle to make reading easier and faster. With BeeLine Reader, the color of the text guides your eye across and between lines, eliminating "line transition errors" (accidentally skipping or repeating lines) and making reading faster, easier and more efficient.



## Highlight, annotate and post-it note readings

Use highlighters and post-it notes to mark important points while reading so you can be easily refer back to them. This can be done both on paper or digitally.



# Reading and writing strategies (cont.)

## Screen readers

A wide range of computer screen readers are available. Some are free, others can be purchased, or the disability service may provide them free.



VoiceOver for OS X.



## Audio books

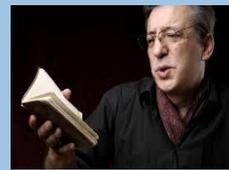
Some are available online or from libraries. The disability service will also record your text books into audio books - but you need to get in early to give them enough time.



## Read out loud

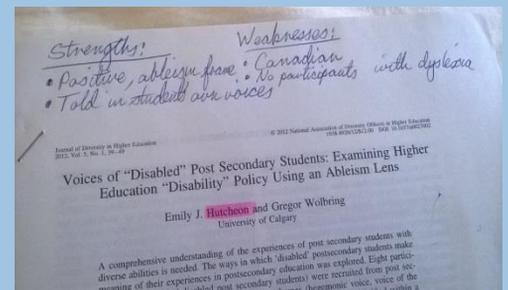
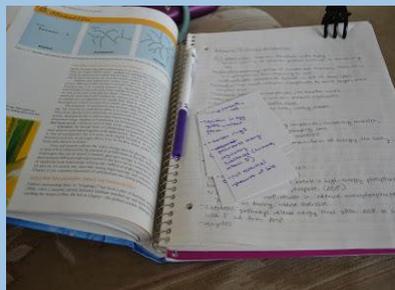
Some students find it helps to speak the words out loud while reading.

It can also help to read your own written work out loud to check for errors.



## Summarise readings

You may find it helpful to summarise readings in your own words while you read them or soon after.



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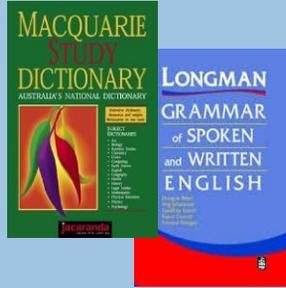
Image credits: Vision Connection, www.wikihow.com, Jeff Daly via www.flickr.com, www.somuchhustle.com, Amanda via www.semihealthblog.com, Lois MacCullagh.



# Reading and writing strategies (cont.)

## Dictionaries with phonetic spellings

It may help to keep a dictionary or grammar book handy while reading or writing. Use phonetic spellings to sound out words, or an online version that speaks words aloud.



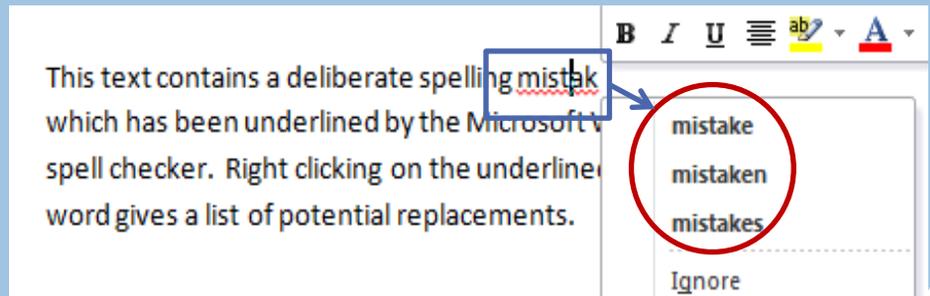
## Format pages in columns

Research\* has found that people with dyslexia often find it easier to read text formatted into columns rather than a single block of text spanning the whole width of the page.

What do you think? Did you find the box of text on the left easy to read? Or do you find this wider block of text easier to read? The key issue here is probably easier scanning from one line to the next. If you don't want to hand your assignments in with columns, just reformat them before submitting them. You may also find it easier to read articles or webpages on your mobile phone if they get reformatted into a narrow column.

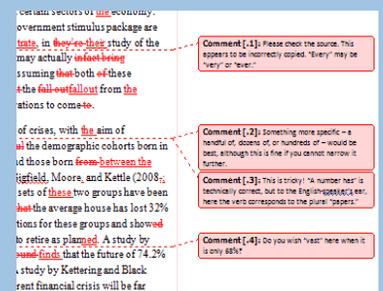
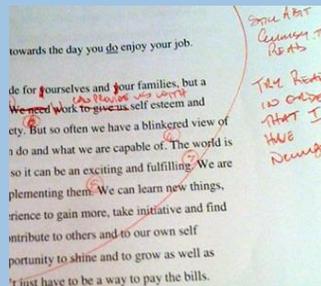
## Spelling and grammar checkers

Make clever use of online and inbuilt spelling and grammar checkers. For example, did you know that you can right-click on misspelled words to see a list of suggestions?



## Editing

Ask a friend or family member to read and edit your work. This means you'll need to finish your assignments before the due date to allow time for editing.



# General learning strategies

## Websites and online resources

Search the internet for educational websites and other learning resources. A Google Scholar search can be a good start. Blogs and sample essays can also be useful.



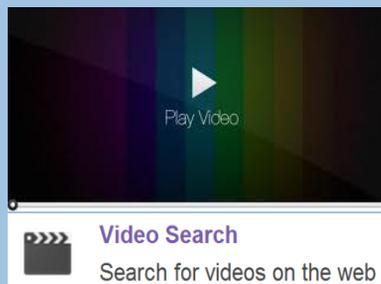
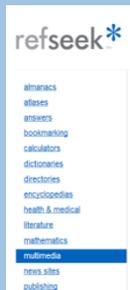
Scholar

Search scholarly papers



## Videos

Many students with dyslexia particularly like to learn by watching videos. Search online or in your university library for high quality educational videos.



## Study skills workshops and PAL sessions

Many universities run face-to-face Study Skills Workshops and 'Peer Assisted Learning' group tutoring by students from the previous year.



## Tutoring

From a friend, paid, or through the university disability service



## Planning

Keep a diary, start assignments early, break big tasks into small steps, reward yourself after each step

