



# Dysgraphia and OT

*“Children are likely to live up to what you believe of them.” – Lady Bird Johnson*

## What is Dysgraphia?

Dysgraphia is a learning difference that primarily affects writing abilities. Kids with dysgraphia often struggle with forming letters, spacing words properly, or organising their thoughts on paper. Dysgraphia can be ‘hand based’, ‘brain based’ or both.

Dysgraphia can typically be viewed through three different lenses. A child can have one, two, or all three of the types of dysgraphia.

**1. Dyslexic Dysgraphia:** Is mainly about about spelling and writing and is not as impacted by poor/weak fine motor development. This type of dysgraphia is far more about the processing and memory components of writing than the physical.

**2. Grapho (Motor) dysgraphia:** Results from deficits in fine motor, visual-motor integration, muscle tone, postural supports, etc. There is a breakdown between the language centres of the brain and the “motor map” signals being sent to the fingers.

**3. Spatial dysgraphia:** Drawing and writing tasks are difficult, but spelling may not be affected. It often stems from difficulties in integrating sensory information impacting body awareness

## What could Dysgraphia look like for your child?

It can show up in different ways for each child, but it’s important to understand that it has nothing to do with how smart or hardworking your child is. Here are some common areas of difficulty for children with Dysgraphia:

**1. Handwriting Difficulties:** Kids may struggle with neat handwriting, sometimes almost illegible, ranging from forming letters, keeping words spaced out, or even managing to write in straight lines.

**2. Motor Skills Challenges:** Holding a pen or pencil might feel tiring or uncomfortable, making writing physically hard.

**3. Spelling Issues:** Difficulty memorising and recalling correct letter sequences, even if they can spell words out loud, writing the letters in the right order can be tough.

**4. Slow Writing Speed:** Organising thoughts on paper can take longer, so their writing speed might be slower than their peers’.

**5. Poor Grammar and Punctuation:** Putting ideas into clear sentences and using the right punctuation can be a challenge.

**6. Frustration and Anxiety:** Writing can be frustrating and overwhelming, which might impact their confidence and self-esteem.

**7. Trouble with Written Organisation:** Planning and structuring what they want to write (like essays or assignments) can be overwhelming.

**8. Note-taking Difficulties:** Copying notes quickly and accurately in class can feel nearly impossible at times, leaving them feeling like they are constantly falling behind.

BECAUSE THESE CHILDREN FACE CHALLENGES, THEY OFTEN DEVELOP INCREDIBLE LISTENING SKILLS, BECOME MASTERS OF RECALLING SPOKEN INFORMATION, HAVE A FANTASTIC MEMORY AND ARE OUTSTANDING STORYTELLERS.

### Strategies to support children with Dysgraphia

- **Reduce time pressures:** Taking away firm time structures for students can support their engagement in writing tasks, and make them feel more enabled to complete their work.
- **Provide Visual Supports:** Lined or graph paper can help with spacing and alignment, making writing more organised, giving them a clear path to work with.
- **Break Down Writing Tasks:** Have them work in small steps, like writing one sentence or paragraph at a time to make it less overwhelming.
- **Build Hand Strength:** Activities like playing with clay, using tweezers, or beading can improve fine motor skills for better control.
- **Use Assistive Technology:** There are “speech-to-text” apps that allow kids to speak their ideas, reducing the need for handwriting.
- **Celebrate Effort:** Acknowledge their hard work and progress to help build their confidence and reduce frustration. Celebrate all the wins!
- **Work with the School:** Talk to teachers about extra time for writing tasks, reduced writing requirements, or access to technology in the classroom. Having a partnership between parent/guardian and the teacher benefits everyone.
- **Encourage Typing:** Consider using a computer or tablet, typing can often be easier for your child, and can allow them to achieve things a little faster.



REMEMBER, DYSGRAPHIA IS JUST ONE CHAPTER IN YOUR CHILD'S STORY. IT DOESN'T DEFINE THEM, OR THEIR POTENTIAL.