

Dyslexia and recruitment,

It is thought that **one in ten of us experiences some degree of dyslexia.**

Dyslexia is not a barrier to success as proved by Richard Branson founder of Virgin Group, IKEA founder Ingvar Kamprad, former CEO of Goldman Sachs Gary Cohn and John Chambers, former CEO of CISCO, and a whole list of Hollywood names.

Dyslexia can make a competitive Graduate job market feel even tougher. Graduate applications, CVs, covering letters, assessment days and interviews can be all the more stressful if reading, writing and spelling are not your strengths.

It is not just a case of errors in grammar and spelling, dyslexia does not manifest itself in the same way for everyone. Some may have problems ordering their ideas or clearly structuring sentences that enable giving explicit examples of qualities and experiences, an integral part of many recruitment processes.

But it is important to be objective about your strengths as well as the things you find difficult, having dyslexia can actually be an asset!

Persistence is often seen as one of these strengths and can certainly help in your search for a career. But you do not simply have to persist there are many strategies and tools that can help you, like mind mapping and voice activated software. The best way to check any document is to read it out loud. Seek help from others with writing your CV and covering letters and in preparing for interviews. These are all things that you can do to minimise the impacts of dyslexia allowing you to focus on your strengths, including the benefits of dyslexia.

Don't concentrate on what you are not brilliant at play to your strengths lots of dyslexics are creative, visual thinkers and much more besides, use this and back it up with examples

This document will show some of the strengths and also go through some of the considerations when engaging with the recruitment process for people with Dyslexia

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Skills/ Strength with Dyslexia

Dyslexia presents differently for each individual so the degree that the benefit may be realized will also be different for each individual. These are some of the strengths/skills that you can look for within yourself:

- **Seeing the bigger picture**

People with dyslexia often see things more holistically, taking in stimulus and information from the wider environment/sources and synthesizing these to form an understanding. This can be very useful in enabling strategic thinking, a quality that is highly sought in graduate level roles

They may miss the trees but see the forest.

"Perhaps my early problems with dyslexia made me more intuitive: when someone sends me a written proposal, rather than dwelling on detailed facts and figures, I find that my imagination grasps and expands on what I read." - Richard Branson, from Losing My Virginity: How I've Survived, Had Fun, and Made a Fortune Doing Business My Way, Times Business, 1998

- **Interconnected reasoning**

Interconnected reasoning is connections that can be relationships of likeness –for example analogies or causal relationships, or the ability to change perspective and view an object or event from multiple perspectives. This can enable the ability to get the "gist" or big-picture context surrounding an event or idea. This enable the lateral thinking that can identify new and innovative connections to be made providing insights that others may miss.

Many people with dyslexia work in highly interdisciplinary fields or fields that require combining perspectives and techniques gained from different disciplines or backgrounds.

- **Improved pattern recognition**

People with dyslexia have the ability to see how things connect to form complex systems, and to identify similarities among multiple things. Such strengths are likely to be of particular significance for fields like science and mathematics, where visual representations are key.

- **Pattern narrative reasoning**

Many People with dyslexia tend to remember facts as experiences, examples or stories, rather than abstractions.

These individuals excel in fields where telling and understanding stories are important, like sales, counselling, physiotherapy, trial law or even teaching. In addition, a large number of professional writers are dyslexic.

- **Dynamic Reasoning**

The ability to reason well in dynamic settings when the facts are incomplete or changing. Linked to the abilities of interconnected reasoning and the ability to see the bigger picture.

People strong in this area often work in the business field, in financial markets or in scientific fields that reconstruct past events, like geologists or palaeontologists. These people are comfortable working with processes that are constantly changing, and in making predictions.

- **Finding the odd one out**

People with dyslexia can excel at global visual processing and the detection of impossible figures. Able to look at large quantities of visual data see the things that are out of place

There are so many people with dyslexia in the field of astrophysics that it prompted research at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics. Findings confirmed that those with dyslexia are better at identifying and memorizing complex images.

- **Thinking outside the box – problem solving**

Those with dyslexia are well known for having sudden leaps of insight that solve problems with an unorthodox approach, however think of it more as the culmination of the strength already mentioned. This is an intuitive approach to problem solving easing around a problem to let connections assemble.

- **Good spatial knowledge**

Many people with dyslexia demonstrate better skills at manipulating 3D objects in their mind. Many of the world's top architects and fashion designers have dyslexia. Strong in areas such as art, sculpture, design, engineering etc.

- **Picture Thinkers**

People with dyslexia tend to think in pictures rather than words. Research at the University of California has demonstrated children with dyslexia have enhanced picture recognition memory.

In an increasing visual world of infographic memes and online advertising this could be perceived as a strength within a communication toolkit.

- **Highly innovative/ creative**

Many of the world's most creative actors have dyslexia.

Pablo Picasso (Artist)

Picasso was described by his teachers as “having difficulty differentiating the orientation of letters”. Picasso painted his subjects as he saw them – sometimes out of order, backwards or upside down. His paintings demonstrated the power of his imagination, which was perhaps linked to his the inability to see written words properly.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/science/science-news/8128233/Dyslexia-the-secret-of-Da-Vinci-and-Picassos-success.html>

Ikea Founder – naming convention for products – distinct assemble instructions part of Ikeas worldwide appeal And can be linked to a more entrepreneurial nature as well

- **Good verbal communication skills**

The reading and writing elements are considered some of the possible weakness of dyslexia however this often has the balance that you have developed great verbal communication skills.

- **Persistence and determination**

Some things might take a bit longer or are harder work to work through and understand. But having got this far to University you will have already shown these qualities.

- **Collaboration and teamwork**

Understanding divergent ways of being and thinking through your own experience can help open you up to that of others.

Whilst the need sometimes to get and process information in different ways can also engender a positive view of working with others.

Not every dyslexic develops the same strengths. However, by knowing them we can nurture them, so they can fully develop and contribute to your progression.

Dyslexia in the future economy

It is only really the last 200 years, during the Industrial Era, that the dyslexic's abilities were not as much in demand, it was more the left-brain abilities that were in demand. The "New Economy" (the Information Age the Internet Economy or 4th industrial revolution) needs and rewards exactly the kind of abilities that can be a strength of dyslexia! In other words: the dyslexic brain is very well equipped for the new work environment.

Approach to the Recruitment process

Reasonable adjustments

It is your choice whether or not to disclose your dyslexia during recruitment, and at which point in the process. If you do, don't apologise, do it with confidence. Here in the UK employers are bound by equality legislation and have to make 'reasonable adjustment' for people with dyslexia, which means making allowances in selection and interview and providing certain kinds of support in the job.

Reasonable adjustments are not about giving you an unfair advantage, they are about giving you a fair chance and the conditions to perform well. Reasonable adjustments should be implemented from first advertisement of a position, throughout the recruitment process and during working life up to and including departure or dismissal procedures.

Understanding your particular range of reasonable adjustments can help you better articulate these to others that may not understand that many of these are simple and minimal cost or no cost, mitigating worries that employees may otherwise have

Examples of reasonable adjustments for people with Dyslexia include:

- Providing modified equipment and access to computer software for proofreading and planning of work, assistive software (screen reader/voice recognition). Speech to text software (Dragon Etc.) mind mapping software, spellcheck etc.
- Using a computer instead of handwriting. Facility to print documents.
- Making instructions and manuals more accessible (e.g. different colour or size backgrounds or fonts, or coloured transparency sheets, larger font, audio, etc.)
- Provision of written materials in advance or in alternative formats (e.g. electronically or hard copy).
- Extra time for considering information and reporting.
- Extra time for written assessments/work and planning of work.
- Allocating some of a disabled employee's work to someone else e.g. minute taking, proofreading (where not integral to the role).
- It is reasonable to expect an employer to provide any tests in an appropriate format provided this has been requested in advance of the event and not just on the day itself. Some people with dyslexia are much better able to express their ideas verbally than in writing, although this is not the case for everyone.
- Quiet working space.

Tests and interviews possible reasonable adjustments:

- Extra time and/or use of a word processor during written tests (as per any arrangements they have had to date in public examinations).
- Exam papers to be on a coloured paper in dyslexia friendly font.
- Using assistive software (screen reader/voice recognition).
- Request for any large amounts of reading, for example a scenario or case study, is sent in advance or is available in an electronic version so you can use a screen reader.
- If there is a computer-based exercise you might want to ask if you can use your own laptop. Check in advance that this will work. (This would allow you to use any assistive technology you are used to and will allow you to demonstrate that, with reasonable adjustments, you are fully capable of carrying out the task.).
- You might ask for a longer interview in order to give you time to process and answer questions.
- Request that multiple-staged questions are asked in steps.
- Aware may also need to be prompted to rephrase their answers to interview questions if they have not been clear the first time.
- A scribe.
- Supervised rest breaks.
- Separate room.

Many reasonable adjustments can be implemented without much expenditure, If additional costs are to be incurred, you can apply for funding through the government's [Access to Work scheme](#). Whilst the only adjustments they will pay for at the interview stage are those involving communication support, if someone with dyslexia does not disclose and is then rejected due to spelling mistakes in the application or written test, they cannot then claim discrimination.

Job search

There are ways to help identify some employers who are particularly keen to attract applications from disabled candidates. Things to look out for include:



- Achievement of the [Disability Confident Employer status](#) (formerly 'Two Ticks' Award (symbolised by two ticks and the words "positive about disabled people"). Only employers who have proved ongoing commitment to disability initiatives and support of employees/applicants with disabilities are able to achieve this award. These employers also guarantee interviews will be offered to any disabled applicants who meet the minimum criteria for the role.
- Equal opportunities policy statement on company websites.
- Profiles of disabled employees on website or company literature.
- Evidence of commitment to equal opportunities on recruitment material (including offer of adjustment to materials at application stage and requests for information about adjustments needed to enable optimum performance during the recruitment process or in the workplace)

It is important however to note that just because an employer does not appear to demonstrate the criteria above it does not mean they will not be disability friendly.

Check out each individual job description, and see how your strengths fit in. Is a job that requires a lot of admin, for example, appropriate to your skills? And would you be comfortable in this position? Remember not to simply discount yourself, strengths, rather than weaknesses, should always be at the front of your mind.

Printing off (or on screen) and going through the job advert and person specification with coloured highlighting key words and phrases too, You could also make a plan or map of all your evidence of skills, colour code the relevant sections and tick off the items on the job specification as you go to make sure you meet the essential criteria.

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These following links are to just some of the organisations that post roles specifically for people with disability, learning difference or long term health conditions:

<https://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/autism-exchange/our-current-opportunities>

<https://www.employ-ability.org.uk/internships>

<https://www.evenbreak.co.uk/jobs/>

<https://myplusstudentsclub.com/jobs/>

Applications and CV

Writing competitive applications and a CV takes time regardless of whether you have dyslexia or not. Do not leave these things until the last minute, factor in extra time to allow you to represent yourself in the best way and to ensure that you have checked for the little errors that recruiters may penalise you for.

Tips:

- Allow enough time and find a quiet place to complete the form.
- If possible download or complete on a computer, this will allow you to use spell check and you won't need to worry about your handwriting.
- If you have to fill it by hand, photocopy it and use this for your first draft. Once you have completed your first draft, come back later and read it afresh, this will help you to see it more objectively.
- Use lists or mindmaps to structure your answers. Remember the [CARE model](#) is useful for structuring your answers. Write a rough draft before completing the form. Try not to jump around in your answers.
- Ask someone to read your answers over for you, and to read them aloud to you. So both of you can spot any errors.
- Get a friend or family member to help proof read, this is a good tip whether you have dyslexia or not.
- Make sure you complete all of the form/s and that you sign it.

At Interview

Remember you are being interviewed because on paper you have already met their criteria and have demonstrated the skills and abilities they require. It is important for both you and the employer to focus on your ability rather than your disability.

Job interviews can be a source of stress for any student but particularly for those with dyslexia who may struggle with interpreting compound questions or structuring a coherent answer under pressure but examples of how you tackle problems and overcome challenges easier to come by

Tips:

- It is important to anticipate potential interview questions and consider how you could answer these. Mock interviews can help you consolidate your answers ready for the real interview.
- Use the CARE model to help structure your answers.
- Think about how you would both describe the effects of your dyslexia and your coping strategies, remember to draw on the positives of dyslexia as well.
- You can ask for permission to use notes or prompt cards in the interview if you wish to.
- Don't be afraid to ask for a question to be repeated or reframed to help with your understanding.
- Request that multiple-staged questions are asked in steps.

An employer will be entitled to ask questions about how your dyslexia may affect the role you are being interviewed for but they cannot ask any personal questions or questions about your dyslexia that do not strictly relate to your performance of the role.

You could ask if they would like you to briefly explain, they may not feel that they can ask, this can prevent them from making inaccurate assumptions about your ability or capability of performing the role. This can be an opportunity to talk about reasonable adjustments, present these in a positive way.

Assessment and tests

Some recruitment processes will involve certain selection tools to assess your ability to do the job. These may include psychometric or aptitude tests, a group exercise or case study.

Adjustments available may include extra time to complete the tests or alternative format material. In some cases you may be exempt from some tests such as multiple choice and psychometric tests if you find the visual tracking and sequencing skills required very difficult as it will be considered a reasonable adjustment that they test the abilities they are measuring by alternative means.

Tips:

- If the employer has not told you in advance what the process will include you should contact them and ask in order to ensure you are not placed at a disadvantage on the day.
- Using assistive software (screen reader/voice recognition), Check if you can use your own laptop. Or have this uploaded on to their computers.
- If Case studies are involved see if you can receive these early to give you enough time to read and process the information.
- If you receive extra time in your University test you may also get this in Assessment and tests with employers.
- You can request papers on different coloured paper.
- Come prepared with different coloured highlighters if appropriate.