



Designed to support the success of Primary ITO trainees by providing best practice guidance to assessors, verifiers, employers, Primary ITO staff, teachers, tutors and mentors.



# BEST PRACTICE GUIDEBOOK

## LITERACY AND NUMERACY

# Contents



**LITERACY AND NUMERACY –  
WHAT IS IT AND DO WE HAVE  
A PROBLEM?**

page \_\_\_\_\_

4



**TELL-TALE SIGNS OF  
A LITERACY AND/OR  
NUMERACY DEFICIT**

page \_\_\_\_\_

6



**ASSISTING TRAINEES  
WITH LITERACY  
CHALLENGES**

page \_\_\_\_\_

8

**NEURODIVERSITY**

page \_\_\_\_\_

10

**ASSISTING TRAINEES  
WITH DYSLEXIA AND  
OTHER LEARNING**

page \_\_\_\_\_

12



**HOW TO RECOGNISE  
DYSLEXIA IN ADULTS  
AKO AOTEAROA**

page \_\_\_\_\_

16-17

**A DYSLEXIA FRIENDLY  
CLASSROOM SUPPORTS  
ALL TRAINEES**

page \_\_\_\_\_

18



**BEST PRACTICE IN  
THE WORKPLACE**

page \_\_\_\_\_

22

**THE POSITIVE SIGNS OF  
DYSLEXIA**

page \_\_\_\_\_

26

**EMPOWERING TRAINEES**

page \_\_\_\_\_

30



**BEST PRACTICE ASSESSING  
FOR TUTORS, ASSESSORS  
AND VERIFIERS**

page \_\_\_\_\_

34



**HOW DOES PRIMARY ITO  
SUPPORT TRAINEES WITH  
LITERACY CHALLENGES?**

page \_\_\_\_\_

36

## INTRODUCTION

This guidebook is to inform and assist those interacting with Primary ITO trainees to identify and support trainees who have literacy and numeracy challenges including neurodiversity

## Literacy and Numeracy – what is it and do we have a problem?

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**Literacy** is defined as the written and oral language people use in their everyday life, learning and work. It includes reading, writing, speaking and listening. Skills in this area are essential for good communication in the modern world.

**Numeracy** is the ability to understand and work with numbers to solve problems in real life.

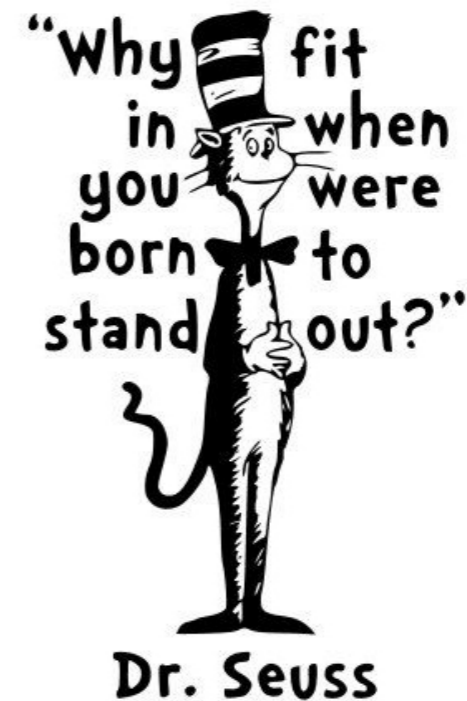
Repeated international surveys confirm that there is a major literacy and numeracy deficit in adults in the New Zealand workforce. At least 40% of adults have literacy and numeracy skills below the level required to effectively perform in their job and the primary sector is likely to have at least 48%.

So, the answer is yes, we do have a problem.

Trainees with low literacy will struggle with filling out forms and other documentation in their workplace and private life and also struggle to complete the theory part of their training. They are usually very good at the practical side of their training but completing assessments and bookwork can be a challenge.

It is important that all trainees have the same opportunities to be successful when enrolling in a qualification and understanding the challenges and using techniques and strategies that acknowledge learning differences ensure a greater chance of success. Low literacy is not limited to the lower level programmes – trainees right up to diploma level have literacy and numeracy deficits.

Limited literacy and numeracy skills impact on trainees in their roles in the workplace as well as during their training. If we are to produce a competent primary sector workforce capable of moving into supervisory and management roles, we need to support their literacy and numeracy skill development.

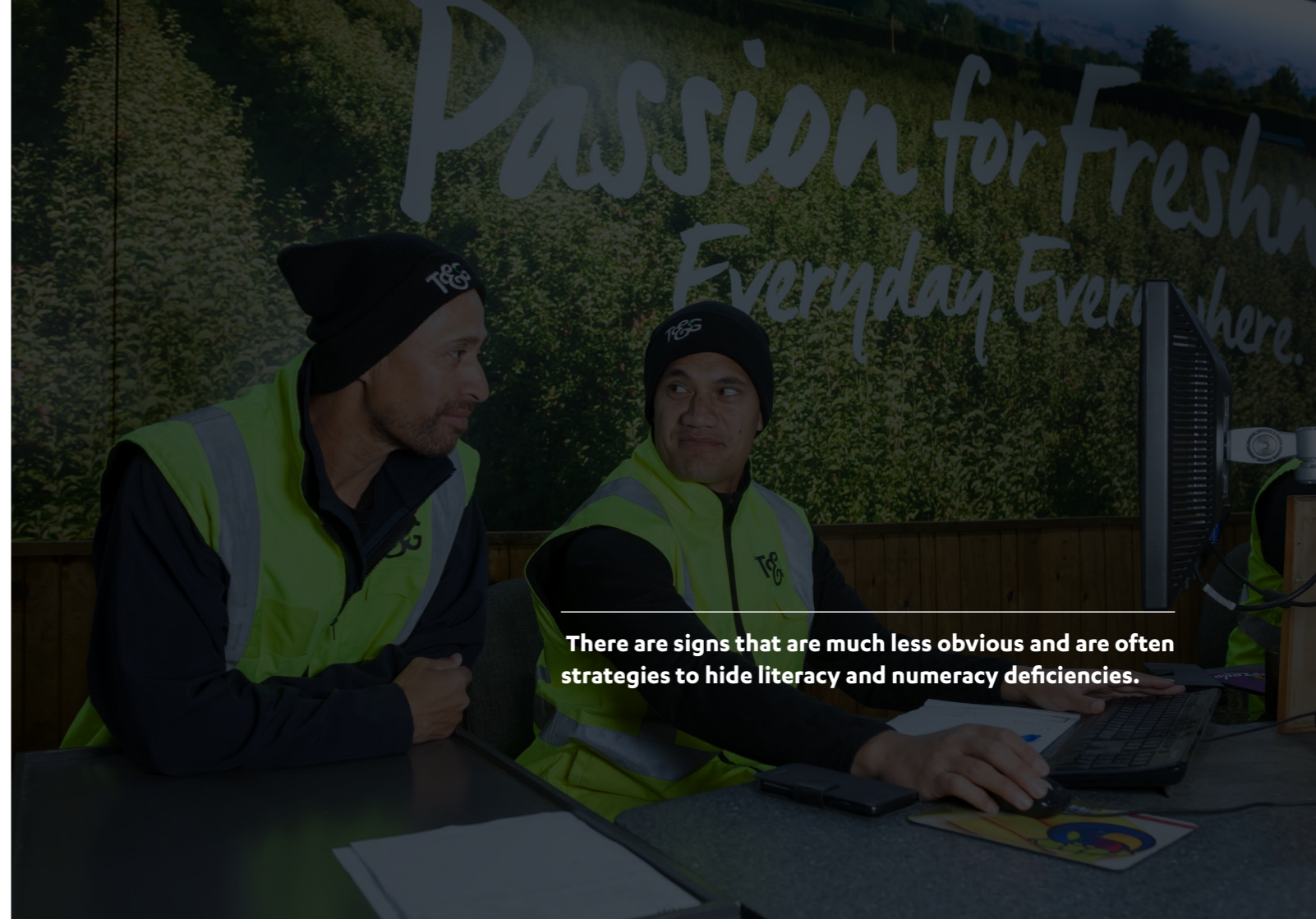


## Tell-tale signs of a literacy and/or numeracy deficit

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There can be obvious signs such as very poor handwriting and laboriously slow reading. There are also signs that are much less obvious and are often strategies to hide literacy and numeracy deficiencies. Some signs could be:

- A reluctance to read out loud either in class or the workplace.
- Taking paperwork home to fill in (often partner will complete).
- Will say they have forgotten their glasses so can't read or complete a form.
- Ask people to leave a phone message rather than text or write a note.
- A reluctance to organise bookings of any sort.
- Mispronouncing words and difficulty finding the right word.
- Tries to memorise information or asks the informer to write it down.
- Misses appointments or turns up at the wrong time or place.
- Refuses promotions and training in the workplace.



**There are signs that are much less obvious and are often strategies to hide literacy and numeracy deficiencies.**

## Assisting trainees with literacy challenges

Low literacy can be supported in a variety of ways.

- 1 Primary ITO create all resources using Plain English principles such as using short sentences, the active voice, and being clear and precise with instructions.
- 2 Tutors, employers and assessors can give instructions in clear simple sentences and ask the trainee to repeat back to ensure they understand.
- 3 Make tuition as multi-sensory as possible.
- 4 Take time to explain, repeating if necessary.
- 5 Direct trainees to Pathways Awarua. [pathwaysawarua.com](http://pathwaysawarua.com)
- 6 One on one support by mentors or literacy providers.



## Neurodiversity

While dyslexia is the most common form of learning differences, it is not unusual for a person to have more than one condition. They are specific and often referred to as neurodiversity – a combination of neurological and diversity – variations in the human brain regarding sociability, learning pathways, attention, mood and other mental functions.

Neurodiversity can cause specific literacy and numeracy challenges. It is a major reason why many of our trainees either do not complete their training or go over duration in their training programmes.

It is also a major reason why many do not take up training in the first place

From 10-20% of our trainees will have learning differences. It is likely that half the literacy and numeracy issues faced by our trainees are the result of learning differences which have not been identified or addressed.

Motivation is paramount, along with confidence building. Many of our trainees have had a long history of poor experiences of education and training. Many trainees will have low confidence as a result of their poor learning experiences. Restored self-confidence is important for on-going training.

## Learning differences are different to learning styles.

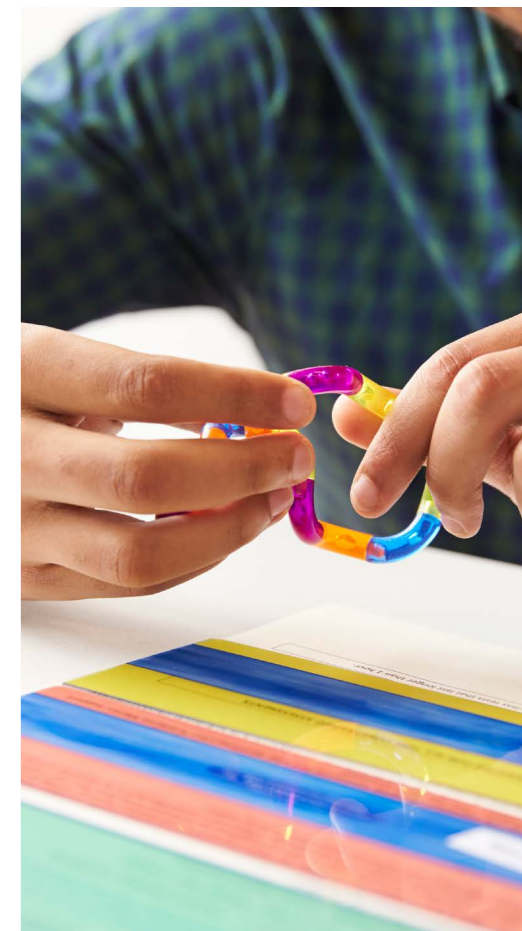
Included in the range of learning differences are: -

- ① **Dyslexia** (difficulty with text + other things)
- ② **Dyscalculia** (difficulty with numbers)
- ③ **Dyspraxia** (often referred to as Developmental Co-ordination Disorder. Impacts mostly on physical abilities, like holding and using a pencil, but affects motor skills over the whole body)
- ④ **ADD and ADHD.** (Attention Deficit Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.)
- ⑤ **Dysgraphia** (Similar to Dyspraxia but most important impact is in writing.)
- ⑥ **Irlen's Syndrome.** Sometimes called Visual Stress
- ⑦ **Autism Spectrum Disorder** (developmental disorder of variable severity that is characterized by difficulties in social interaction and communication and by restricted or repetitive patterns of thought and behaviour).

**Neurodiversity lasts a lifetime - we do not grow out of it.**

**Neurodiversity affects all genders.**

**Neurodiversity is a genetic condition, passed down from generation to generation.**



# Assisting trainees with dyslexia and other learning differences

## Assisting trainees

While dyslexia is the most common learning difference – or neuro-diverse condition, it is most likely that you will encounter others in your classroom or workplace. The three most common conditions beyond Dyslexia are ADHD, Dyscalculia and Irlen's Syndrome. Each of the three above are present in around 5% of the population. Many learners will have a combination of learning differences. Latest figures suggest that around 50% of Dyslexic people also have Irlen's.

Set out below is a list of signs and strategies to work with those trainees you encounter who have these neuro-diverse conditions.

### ADHD

SIGNS	STRATEGIES
Impulsiveness.	Set regular routines and stick to them.
Disorganisation and problems prioritising.	Allow regular breaks
Poor time management skills.	Provide lots of kinaesthetic activities.
Problems focusing on a task.	For assessments provide an many opportunities as possible for practical activities and oral assessments.
Trouble multitasking.	Limit any unnecessary distractions.
Excessive activity or restlessness.	Break down activities into bite sized portions.
Poor planning.	Have a one-to-one discussion to set goals/expectations
Low frustration tolerance.	Encourage ADHD trainees to use timers to manage their own progression.

## Irlen's Syndrome

**Note:** Irlen's Syndrome is a visual perception condition in which those that have it are very sensitive to extreme visual stimuli. Irlen's subjects find the following visual stimuli stressful: -

- prolonged exposure to black text on white paper
- fluorescent light, including some computer screens
- exposure to contrasting colour combinations

SIGNS	STRATEGIES
Difficulties in concentrating when reading lots of text.	<p>Print training resources and assessment activities on buff coloured paper. (Most Irlen's sufferers have a preferred colour but any colour is better than white)</p> <p>Provide a range of coloured filters – even coloured plastic sleeves can assist Irlen's subjects.</p> <p>If possible, move away from fluorescent light sources.</p> <p>For computer use arrange to change the background colour of Irlen's subject's screens.</p> <p>Change the background colour for power point presentations</p>
Often report having headaches or migraines.	
Slow or inefficient reading.	
Poor reading comprehension.	
Poor attention and concentration.	
Eye strain	
Fatigue	
Sensitivity to bright and fluorescent lighting and glare.	
Poor depth perception.	

## Dyscalculia

**Note:** Dyscalculia often co-exists with Math Anxiety – which is a morbid fear of anything related to numbers.

SIGNS	STRATEGIES
Difficulties managing time and telling the time.	<p>Start with concrete "real" things, before you move to numbers.</p> <p>Do lots of hands-on, practical activities.</p> <p>Encourage them to use calculators together with estimations.</p> <p>Encourage them to use squared paper to do calculations.</p> <p>Give them lots of worked examples – so they have something to follow.</p> <p>Always relate number activities to real life situations.</p> <p>In assessment situations minimise the numeracy activities involved if possible because their numeracy difficulties will distract from their competencies elsewhere.</p>
Often are vocal about their difficulties. "Oh no, I don't do maths!"	
Struggle with money	
Often do not remember 'basic' facts.	
Slow to perform calculations.	
No sense of numbers & of estimation.	
Do not understand place value.	
Often have a poor sense of direction	



# How to recognise dyslexia in adults

Some common signs:

## Reluctant to read or write in public

If they do, they often miss out the small joining words



Often have excellent spatial, visual, 3-D skills

# Lets get positive about Dyslexia

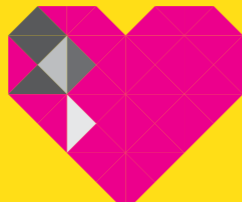
Dyslexia is an extremely varied condition and no two dyslexic people will have the same set of characteristics. Many will have had a range of unhappy experiences during their school and work lives to date, but the good news is that there is support available.

Will often take a long time to complete tasks – even though they may be trying really hard



Often struggle with time management or organisation skills

Often intuitive, very empathetic and able to sense other people's moods and energy



Prefer face-to-face meetings and phone calls rather than written text



Excellent long-term memory but short-term memory may be limited



Difficulty remembering verbal instructions, or directions

Often have difficulties:

Reading  
Writing

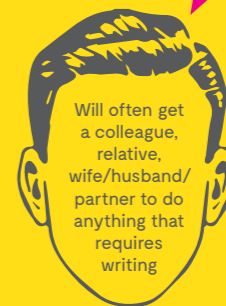
S-P-E-L-L-I-N-G



May confuse left and right hand sides but many are ambidextrous

Reluctant to go on training courses and participate in meetings

Often impatient with formal meetings and can regularly jump straight to an answer of a complex problem



Will often get a colleague, relative, wife/husband/partner to do anything that requires writing

May use an excuse such as "I don't have my glasses with me"

May be strong at their job, but perform poorly in tests and assessments

Most will have left school early



Will often struggle in open plan offices and are easily distracted



Low self-esteem as a result of negative experiences in traditional learning situations



Will shy away from seeking/accepting promotions. Do not want to accept positions where reading/writing are a key element

## What next?

No one dyslexic person will exhibit all of the features above. If one shows 6-7 of these characteristics, it is a sign that further investigation should be considered.

### Getting a screening or diagnosis to confirm dyslexia

- Contact your learning support department to see if they can administer the Lucid LADS Plus screening tool.
- Visit [gudyslexiatest.com](http://gudyslexiatest.com) for an online screening tool called Quickscreen.
- Investigate as to whether your organisation has purchased and is able to administer the personalized Pearson DAST screening tool.
- Both individuals or organisations can contact their local SPELD/NZ branch. SPELD specializes in helping people with dyslexia and those around them.

- Some educational psychologists can administer a full assessment tool at a cost of approx. \$700.

### Professional development for supporting learners with dyslexia

- We have workshops available nationwide for those who need development to better support learners with dyslexia. Visit [ako.ac.nz/professional-learning/](http://ako.ac.nz/professional-learning/) for all upcoming courses.

### Research

- This resource was developed as part of project called 'Evaluating the effectiveness of support interventions for dyslexic learners in multiple learning environments'. To read to full research report, visit [ako.ac.nz](http://ako.ac.nz)
- For a wide range of research, resources and workshops on this topic visit [ako.ac.nz](http://ako.ac.nz)

## A dyslexia friendly classroom supports all trainees

International statistics about the proportions of dyslexic people in the population mean that it is inevitable that you will encounter significant numbers of trainees with dyslexia in your classes. Some subjects attract greater proportions than others, but there is a history of people with dyslexia studying every known discipline.

There are many simple modifications in practice that can be made to make a significant difference to learner outcomes and improve the success rate for students. Changes made to improve the outcomes for trainees with dyslexia do not disadvantage others, in fact what is good for a dyslexic learner is good for all learners.

## Tips from trainees

Here is some advice for tutors from dyslexic trainees. These comments describe some helpful practices.

- ① Draw **pictures and diagrams** on the white board.
- ② **Talk slowly** during presentations.
- ③ **Go over tests** beforehand.
- ④ Use **kinaesthetic** activities.
- ⑤ Encourage and create opportunities for **peer support**.
- ⑥ **Encourage taking photos** of information on the white board.
- ⑦ Check with trainees individually to see if they **understand content**, if not then give them guidance how to get extra assistance.
- ⑧ **Review** assignment requirements.
- ⑨ **Upload** the learning session online before class.



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## Preparing for class

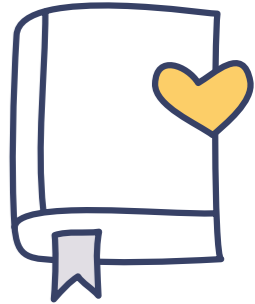
- 1 Make it a **professional development goal** to familiarise yourself with the latest information about what dyslexia is, and how it fits in with the other neuro-diversities.
- 2 **Understand your trainee** through discussion – they are all different and have a different set of symptoms and challenges.
- 3 Provide **proofreading** support.
- 4 Present material in more than one method. That is, **verbalise instructions** but also **write them down**.
- 5 Use **mind maps** as often as possible. This helps dyslexics organise their learning.
- 6 Where possible make **PowerPoint presentations or notes** available the day before.
- 7 Maximise the use of **charts and diagrams**. Colour coding is effective.
- 8 Consider asking someone to be a **note taker** for a dyslexic trainee.
- 9 Try to organise a **“buddy”** for each dyslexic trainee.



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## In the classroom

- 1 Trainees with dyslexia often struggle with metacognition. They will benefit from **extra guidance** to understand how to manage their learning.
- 2 Be on the lookout for trainees who show the signs of dyslexia. They may **not have yet realised or accepted** that they are dyslexic. There will be many trainees who fit into this category.
- 3 Remember that **time is the biggest challenge** for people with learning differences like dyslexia. It takes dyslexic trainees longer to put answers on paper and they need assistance with managing time.
- 4 Make **note-taking easier** for trainees with dyslexia. Consider providing alternative ways for dyslexic trainees to record notes.
- 5 **Never ask dyslexic trainees to read aloud.**
- 6 Consider **increased font size** for dyslexic trainees.
- 7 **Read to the class** to put dyslexic students on equal footing with non-dyslexic trainees.
- 8 Remember that dyslexic trainees have an **issue with working memory**.
- 9 **Be realistic about spelling**. Spelling is the greatest challenge for people with dyslexia.
- 10 Let it be known to your classes that your classroom or lecture theatre is a **“dyslexia friendly environment”**.
- 11 Allow **oral** assessments and presentations.
- 12 When writing on the white board make sure you **read text aloud** at the same time you write it.
- 13 Make tuition as **multi-sensory** as possible
- 14 Make it standard practice to use **coloured paper or coloured backgrounds** for PowerPoint presentations or online written resources.
- 15 Encourage dyslexic trainees to use **technological aids** to assist learning.



# Best practice in the workplace

**As an employer, it is very likely that some of your staff members will be neurodiverse. Dyslexia affects learning and regular workplace behaviour. The actions of team leaders, supervisors, and employers can have a major impact on the workplace success of adults with dyslexia. The following advice and guidance is based on the best current international knowledge.**

## Implications of dyslexia

**Understanding some of the implications of dyslexia can also help to support your staff member, in particular:**

- ✓ Dyslexic people may resist training, promotion and new roles because they struggle with new routines
- ✓ They often have low self- esteem and will need extra encouragement.
- ✓ Oftentimes dyslexic people will have limited short-term or working memory and may need assistance when receiving instructions.
- ✓ Dyslexic people will try many methods to avoid reading or writing in front of people and it is unreasonable to ask them to do so.
- ✓ The symptoms of dyslexia will be much greater when trainees are under pressure or tension.

## Tips to assist your employee

Here is some advice for employees

These comments describe some helpful practices.

- 1 Advise employees that your workplace is **dyslexia friendly**.
- 2 You could assist your dyslexic staff member by having a discussion with them to find out **what they find challenging** and what you could do to help.
- 3 Let them know that it is **OK to be dyslexic** and that they will not be penalised in any way because of their dyslexia.
- 4 **Provide information** to all of your staff about dyslexia. If possible, link up the dyslexic employee with a buddy in the workplace.
- 5 **Giving instructions** is very important. Avoid giving your dyslexic employee multiple instructions
- 6 Wherever possible give them **instructions in two ways**, such as written and oral. Encourage them to write instructions down.
- 7 **Use charts and diagrams** as much as possible when explaining things to them.
- 8 Dyslexic people often need **additional support with time management**. You may consider suggesting that they use the time and clock functions on their phones.
- 9 You could also provide them with a **wall planner** and encourage them to use it.
- 10 Encourage them to use the large number of **technological aids** available.



**Above all – provide them with opportunities to use their innovative, creative skills. We all need chances to excel.**



**WE DO NOT  
SEE THINGS  
AS THEY ARE,  
WE SEE  
THINGS AS  
WE ARE.**



# Positive signs of dyslexia

It is important for people who have dyslexia – and those who work with them – to understand that dyslexia is a neurological difference and that it comes with many positive features as well as challenges.

THE POSITIVE SIGNS OF DYSLEXIA

**Many of the world's most creative and successful people are dyslexic.**

**They do not achieve in spite of their dyslexia, they achieve because of it. There are some very creative and high achieving kiwis who are, or were, dyslexic:**



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## The features

No two dyslexic people are the same. Each person will have their own individual challenges and combination of advantages. In some cases, a feature which is a challenge in some situations is an advantage in others. Research from around the world reveals that dyslexic people often demonstrate the following talents and skills:

- ✔ Strong visual, spatial and three-dimensional skills
- ✔ Building things and solving puzzles
- ✔ Innovative, creative “out of the box” type thinking
- ✔ Often able to jump straight to the solution.
- ✔ Strong reasoning skills. Often able to understand abstract ideas.
- ✔ Many adults with dyslexia are able to see patterns that are not obvious to regular people.
- ✔ Able to see the big picture. Do not get bogged down with details.
- ✔ Very empathetic, with a high level of emotional intelligence. Many are great at “reading people”.
- ✔ Strong verbal communication skills.
- ✔ Known to be imaginative and curious.
- ✔ Able to generate a large number of ideas and thoughts.
- ✔ Known to be great at collaboration and co-operative activities. Therefore, are great team members.
- ✔ Driven, ambitious and persistent.
- ✔ Known to excel in activities not dependent on text – such as advanced mathematics, computing, visual arts and performing arts.



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**Sometimes a dyslexic challenge can be an advantage in different circumstances.**

It is known that people with dyslexia take longer for repeated routine tasks to become automatic. Because of this, dyslexic people may have to tackle routine tasks with more “mindfulness”. The outcome of this is that dyslexic people often innovate and experiment while doing tasks that other people do without thinking.

# Empowering trainees to self-manage their literacy, numeracy and neuro-diverse challenges

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## Empowering trainees

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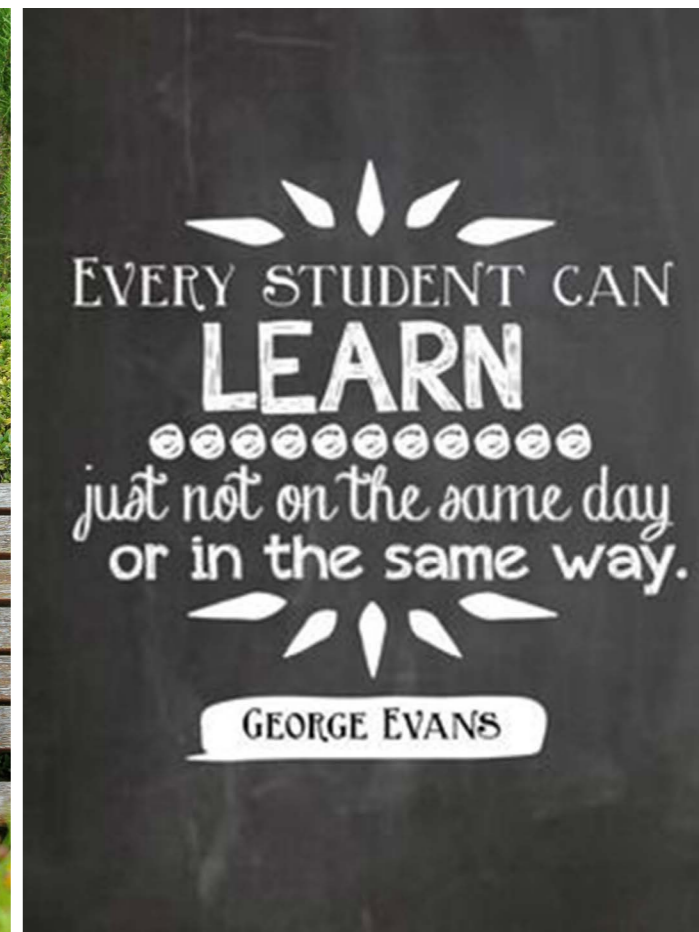
**Best practice in supporting trainees is more than just modifying your practice to accommodate the needs of those trainees. Best practice is encouraging and coaching those trainees to manage their own circumstances to maximise their own potential.**

Each trainee has a combination of challenges and strengths and future proofing trainees includes giving them the tools to maximise their own potential. As tutors, employers, training advisors, assessors and mentors you are often the best agent to facilitate this growth in the trainees who you interact with.



## Best practice is to encourage your trainees to adopt the following behaviours: -

- ✔ Take some time to understand themselves. Trainees who understand their own strengths and challenges do better than those who do not. The most powerful understanding is for them to know that neuro-diverse conditions are differences – not disabilities, and that they are as capable as anybody else.
- ✔ Have good “help seeking” behaviour. Trainees who ask for assistance do best.
- ✔ Use the support of parents, partners or close friends.
- ✔ Develop their own set of tricks and strategies, and the use of technology to “level the playing field”. Modern assistive technologies can transform trainees with learning differences like dyslexia. There are lots of assistive technology on regular phones. Engaging with technology will take trainees some time and effort – but the payoff is enormous.
- ✔ Simple aids like have a little notebook with key words spelled correctly can be a massive assistance for many
- ✔ Get themselves a mentor in their place of work. As employers/tutors/ assessors you can be a facilitator for this.
- ✔ Encourage trainees to be proactive and have perseverance. Setting goals for themselves is essential.





# Best practice assessing for tutors, assessors and verifiers

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On-job assessment is a confirmation that a trainee has reached the desired level of competence in the specific activities and tasks in their training programme.

## Best Practice

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**Many of the trainees being assessed will have literacy and numeracy challenges and a number will have neurodiverse conditions. Assessment should take account of that.**

The focus should be on what the trainee can do rather than what they can't do. Look past literacy and numeracy deficits such as poor spelling and handwriting and assess on evidence provided. Assessment can be in the form of written evidence but also video, photographs, physical demonstrations, third party testimony and oral evidence.

Many neurodiverse trainees will have the provision of a reader writer. This is acceptable practice and the evidence provided should be the trainees' knowledge and this can be confirmed by a discussion with the trainee.

Trainees with low literacy and/or numeracy will be significantly disadvantaged in off job assessments. A fair assessment will take into consideration the extra time and effort required to produce sufficient evidence. An oral assessment could be an equitable alternative.

A neurodiversity is often a combination of differences diagnosis is often a matter of "best fit – not clinical certainty".

# How does Primary ITO support trainees with literacy challenges?



## Primary ITO support

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**Primary ITO have several ways we support trainees with either low literacy or neurodiversity:**

### **Resources**

Our resources are created using plain English principles and best practice guidelines for neurodiverse learners. An open font is used, short sentences, plain English, glossaries, areas of white space, diagrams and photographs. Trainees are offered their resources printed on a colour of their choice if it makes it easier for them to read. They can provide answers typewritten or verbally if handwriting is difficult.

### **Volunteer Mentors**

We have a large group of around 400 volunteer mentors spread across the country supporting trainees one on one or at study events. Mentors come from all walks of life – some are industry experts, others literacy and numeracy experts – neither is a requirement. We have mentors who are current trainees, employers, rural professionals, retired people – the thing they have in common is that they want to help our trainees succeed.

### **Literacy and Numeracy Assessment Tool**

We use the Literacy and Numeracy Assessment Tool to assess Apprentices and those trainees without qualifications to gauge literacy and numeracy levels. This tool is an early indicator of literacy and/or numeracy challenges. When a seemingly bright and articulate trainee has difficulty with the assessment it is an early indication that the trainee is going to need support. Most dyslexic trainees have difficulty with the assessment.

### **Dyslexia and Dyscalculia Screening**

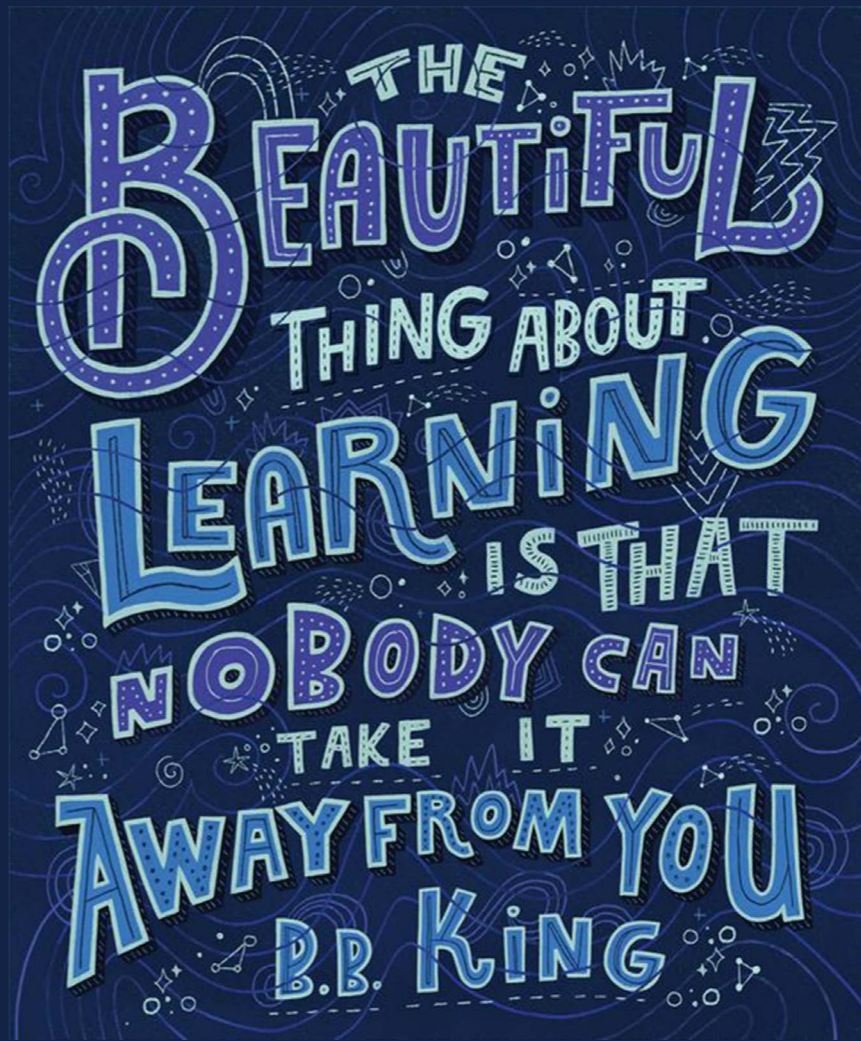
We provide free dyslexia and dyscalculia screenings for those trainees suspected of having those conditions. The screening can be done either online, by Skype or in person depending on location. A report is created and support discussed.

### **Support for Trainees**

We apply on behalf of those trainees who screen as having dyslexia to Workbridge for technology and or reader/writer services to support them with their training and in the workplace.

### **Technology**

We provide advice on which technology, apps etc. will be most useful and suitable to trainees in individual situations.



dyslexia friendly



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