



How to Support Your Young Learner if They Have Dysgraphia

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What Is Dysgraphia?

Firstly, let's dive into the most important question – what is dysgraphia? Dysgraphia is commonly confused as dyslexia; however, they are two different problems. Both are learning difficulties. Dysgraphia affects the cognitive processes that govern writing capacity, whereas dyslexia impairs reading capabilities.

Dysgraphia is categorized as an issue in which children struggle with their handwriting, typing and spelling – it is specifically understood as difficulty with 'transcription'.

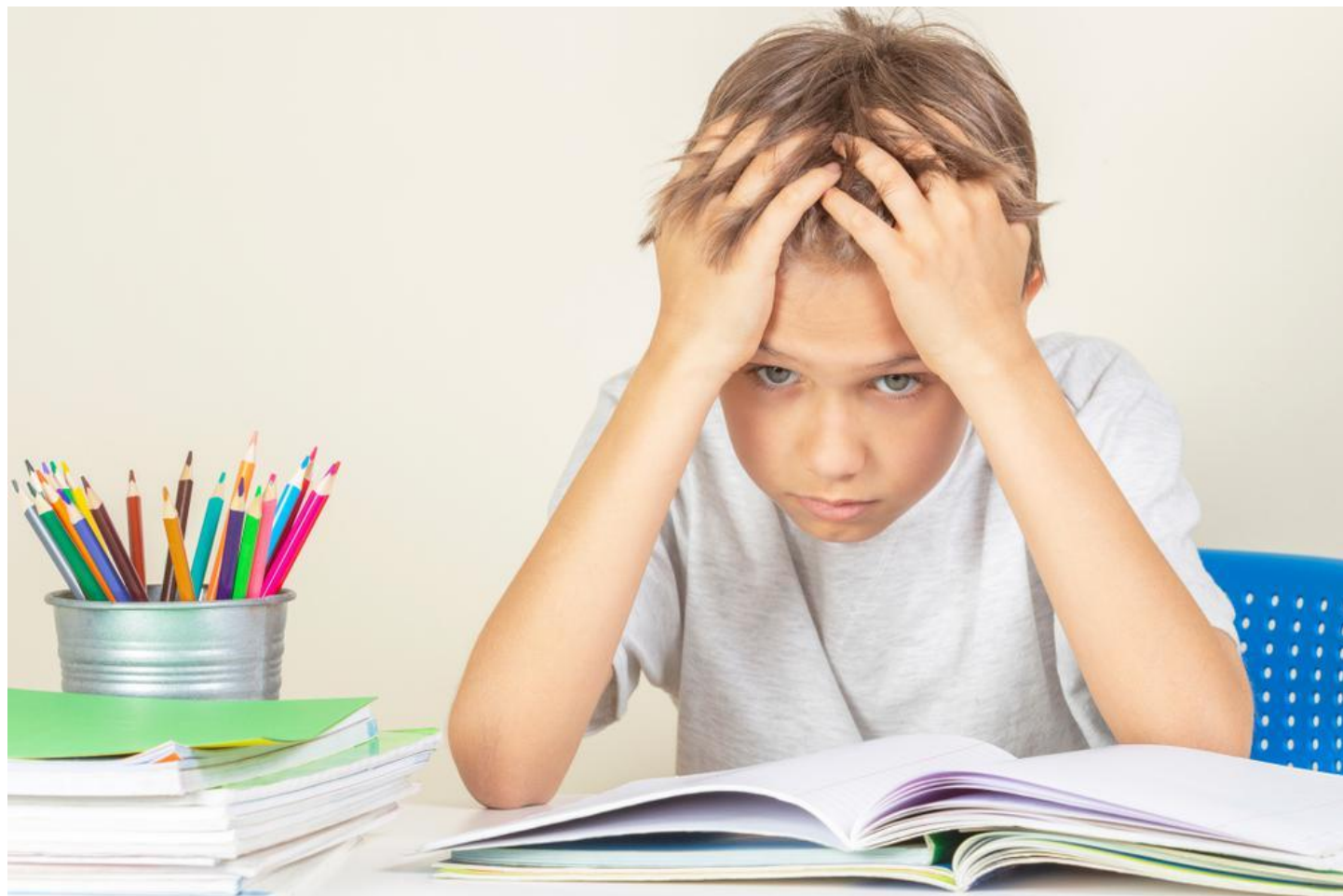
Dysgraphia can be a little confusing to understand as a child who experiences difficulty with their writing, won't necessarily be affected in terms of their reading and speaking capacity. According to research by Psychology Today the issue is most likely to occur in children of early elementary school age, even though there is no official test for it.

The [International Dyslexia Association](#) describes dysgraphia as an impairment in the 'orthographic coding in working memory' which relates to handwriting. Orthographic coding happens in the part of the brain which stores written words in recent memory and enables the individual to analyze letters and word formation. It also governs the ability to create long-term memory of written words, including the understanding of how they are pronounced and what they mean. Children with this condition might also struggle with finger movements and their grip, which explains the difficulties in forming words physically with a writing implement and/or via typing.

The [National Handwriting Association](#) describes dysgraphia as a “disturbance of or difficulty with orthographic-motor integration”. They say that there can be different levels of the developmental disorder and refer to sub-categories known as ‘surface dysgraphia’ or ‘deep dysgraphia’. Research into these areas discusses how different issues are responsible for the writing process being impacted – from motor control, visual perception to spelling difficulties.

The NHA says that because the term dysgraphia can be used differently depending on the professional you speak to, it is important to fully understand what they are referring to when discussing your child or student.

How to Recognise Whether Your Child Has Dysgraphia



These writing difficulties can show themselves within your child's fine motor development, spatial perception and awareness and the way they process language.

If you are noticing incorrectly formed letters, words left out of sentences, letters omitted from words, poor organization of sentences and a struggle to write and think at the same time, then your child may be displaying signs of dysgraphia.

You may recognize that your child is also struggling with their grip and the way they hold their pencil. They might experience regular hand cramps because they are unsure of how to position their arms and hands when writing. In addition to that, they might be confused how to place their entire body during the writing process.

Essentially, when watching your child to observe their writing capacity and process, you are looking to see whether it takes a 'usual' amount of effort and concentration for their age group. Obviously, what is 'normal' varies from child to child and so specifically comparing your child to others may not be helpful, or provide answers, as there can be a lot of writing differentiation across year groups.

How Can You Support Your Child if They Struggle With Their Writing?



According to the [International Dyslexia Association](#) there are many techniques and helpful activities which can aid your child's writing development, specifically if they have dysgraphia.

You can strengthen children's hand muscles by encouraging them to do activities like playing with clay or making and decorating cupcakes. At Kids Academy we're happy to offer a selection of engaging materials that would help children improve their motor skills and enhance their precision and definition capacities: for example our [maze drawing worksheets](#), [coloring pages](#) and [connect-the-dots tasks](#) for different grade levels.

Another great place to start, whether you are a teacher or a parent, is to undertake activities that help children to form letters like letter tracing and formation exercises. We believe that among other resources, our collections of worksheets for tracing [printed](#) and [cursive](#) letters will be helpful in developing this skill – the letters can be traced on a device, like a tablet, or printed and filled in with a pen or pencil, thus providing an opportunity for different types of fine motor practice.

Once you have worked on letter formation and grip, you can move onto activities that aid memory retention and automatic letter writing. Repetition is very helpful here. Hold up letter cards and tell the child to cover the card, close their eyes and imagine what the letter looks like in their head. They can then try and write the letter from memory, as well as from being spoken to.

Assist Your Kid with Writing!

We suppose that dysgraphia is a serious issue that should be brought to light and dealt with at the earliest stages. That's why we would like to present you with our updated Talented and Gifted app and share our bundle of knowledge with you to help your kid enhance their writing skills and more! Now, supplied with funny Eddie the Elephant and the rewarding system, the app has become more engaging and easy to navigate even by the toddler!

Subscribe to the 30-days free trial of the [Talented & Gifted](#) individualized learning program and dive into the activities stacked against dysgraphia: interactive mazes, tracing numbers and letters games, connect-the-dots tasks! [Get the gift for your kid!](#)

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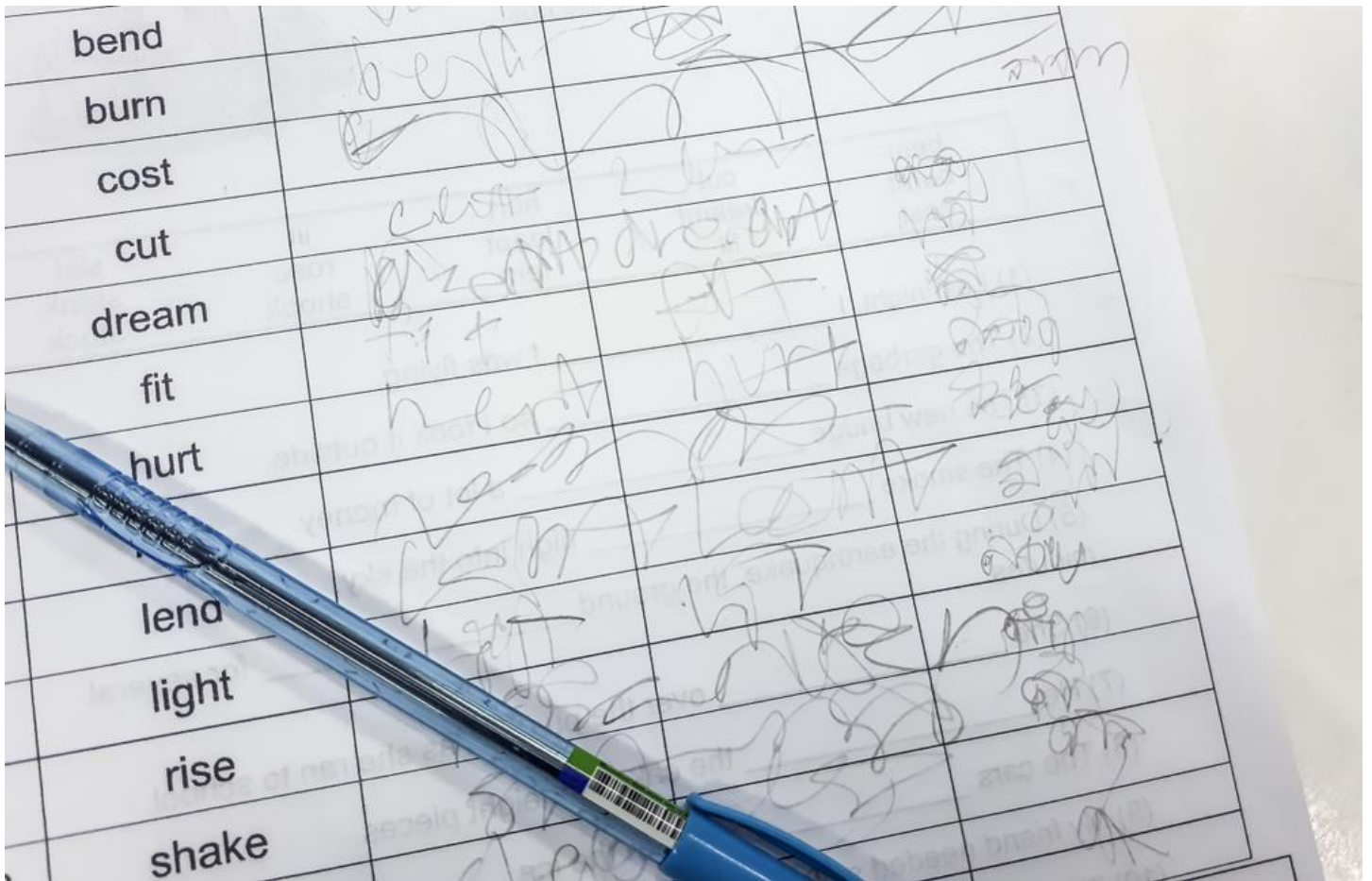
Issues With Writing That Are Not Dysgraphia

Although it is important to keep an eye on your child's writing capacity to monitor their development, it is also important to not over-analyze.

Just because a child has messy handwriting does not mean they have the condition. Dysgraphia is more connected to the process of writing and how difficult it is for your young learner, as opposed to the appearance of what they write.

It is also necessary to point out that every child develops differently and so comparing your child's writing to those around them (although sometimes it can be useful when there are obvious signs of delayed development) can often cause unnecessary pressure on both the child and yourself.

General Tips for Handwriting Support



The [National Handwriting Association \(NHA\)](#) offers advice for all hand writers, and speaks about the way in which a child's difficulty in mastering the skill can lead to frustration and anxiety. This in turn can affect their motivation and confidence with continuing to write, irrespective of their level.

The NHA offers specific areas to explore for those concerned about their child's writing. Firstly, ascertain if your child has received any direct teaching of handwriting, and if they have got to grips about the educational and writing policy of the school they attend.

Next, monitor and record your child's legibility, neatness and comfort when writing so you can be fully aware of all the issues. Have a look at how much pressure your child is placing on their hand and paper when writing and the speed they are going at. Most importantly, as mentioned above, record your child's motivation and enjoyment of the process. If they are reluctant, demotivated and lacking confidence, then you can try introducing more engaging, confidence boosting writing activities. You can find lots of writing exercises in the ELA courses of our [Talented and Gifted app](#).

It can also be useful to understand what 'normal' handwriting for a child of this age is like by looking at the work of other children in the class.

You can further understand the situation by talking to your child's teacher and seeing if they share your concerns. Ask the teacher how often handwriting is taught in class and

what is the teaching style and approach. Once you understand the skills they are teaching you can replicate it in the home environment to further support your child. Likewise, as a teacher you should always discuss the issues with the child's parents so that you can work together to aid their progression.

Also talk about the situation with your child, how do they feel about their writing? Which areas are they struggling with specifically? By gathering this information, you can understand the issue more fully and think about the next course of action.

The NHA notes that introducing a keyboard can be helpful when a child is struggling severely with their handwriting. However, they warn about introducing a keyboard unnecessarily, or too early on in the handwriting development process. The writing charity says that although a keyboard can be a useful tool to help children express themselves, we need to encourage children to write as much as possible because realistically it is a skill they need both in school and in daily life.

The NHA reference research that illustrates the way in which the act of writing aids idea formation and the creative flow process. They also recognize that writing is a key form of personal expression and is closely linked to an individual's identity. By completely discouraging children from writing, you would cut off an avenue for self-expression.

Conclusion

Encouragement, monitoring and praise is always the best approach whatever your child's writing capacity.

According to the NHA, focused support given to a child with handwriting difficulties will make 'a noticeable difference for most children'. It is never too late to provide relevant writing support for children to ensure their successful development.

About the author

[Alison Carter](#) - Play-Based Educator, ESL Teacher, Trauma Sensitive Yoga and Pilates Teacher.

Manchester, England, UK.

Links and references

1. <http://nha-handwriting.org.uk/handwriting/about-handwriting-difficulties/>
2. <https://dyslexiaida.org/understanding-dysgraphia/>

