



Volume 4, Issue 7
July 31, 2011

A Publication of the Office of
Training and Professional
Development

Dysgraphia Signs and Symptoms

1. Illegible printing and cursive writing
2. Shows inconsistencies: mixtures of print and cursive, upper and lower case, or irregular sizes, shapes or slant of letters
3. Has unfinished words or letters, omitted words
4. Inconsistent spacing between words and letters
5. Exhibits strange wrist, body or paper position
6. Has difficulty pre-visualizing letter formation
7. Copying or writing is slow
8. Shows poor spatial planning on paper
9. Has cramped or unusual grip/may complain of sore hand
10. Has great difficulty thinking and writing at the same time (taking notes, creative writing.)

Dysgraphia Strategies

1. Suggest use of word processor
2. Avoid chastising student for sloppy, careless work
3. Use oral exams
4. Allow use of tape recorder for lectures
5. Allow the use of a note taker
6. Provide notes or outlines to reduce the amount of writing required
7. Reduce copying aspects of work (pre-printed math problems)
8. Allow use of wide rule paper and graph paper
9. Suggest use of pencil grips and /or specially designed writing aids
10. Provide alternatives to written assignments (video-taped reports, audio-taped reports)

What is Dysgraphia:

Dysgraphia is a difficulty writing coherently, if at all, regardless of ability to read. People with dysgraphia often can write, and may have a higher than average IQ, but lack coordination, and may find other fine motor tasks such as tying shoes difficult, although it often does not affect all fine motor skills. They can also lack basic spelling skills (having difficulties with p, q, b, d), and often will write the wrong word when trying to formulate thoughts on paper.

In children, the disorder generally emerges when they are first introduced to writing. They make inappropriately sized and spaced letters, or write wrong or misspelled words, despite thorough instruction.

Children with the disorder may have other disabilities; however, they usually have no social or other academic problems. Cases of dys-

Dysgraphia:

A learning disability resulting from difficulty expressing thoughts and graphing.

Serving People with Disabilities in Community Settings

graphia in adults generally occur after some neurological trauma or it might be diagnosed in a person with autism, Asperger's Syndrome, Tourette syndrome or ADHD.



The DSM IV identifies dysgraphia as a "Disorder of Written Expression" as "writing skills that are substantially below those expected given the person's age, measured intelligence, and age-appropriate education.

Causes of Dysgraphia:

The cause of dysgraphia is unknown but whenever it occurs in an adult, it is usually caused by head trauma, some types of diseases or brain damage. When it is found in children there is a tendency

for there to be multiple dysgraphics in his or her family. A parent or close relative of the child tend to also show signs of dysgraphia. However, there have been few studies in the field.

Types of Dysgraphia:

There are three commonly accepted forms of dysgraphia.

Dyslexic Dysgraphia: With dyslexic dysgraphia, spontaneously written work is illegible, copied work is fairly good, and spelling is bad. Finger tapping speed (a method for identifying fine motor problems) is normal, indicating the deficit does not likely stem from cerebellar damage. A Dyslexic Dys-





graphic does not necessarily have dyslexia (dyslexia and dysgraphia appear to be unrelated).

Motor Dysgraphia is due to deficient fine motor skills, poor dexterity, poor muscle tone, and/or unspecified motor clumsiness. Generally, written work is poor to illegible, even if copied by sight from another document. Letter formation may be acceptable in very short samples of writing, but this requires extreme effort and an unreasonable amount of time to accomplish, and cannot be sustained for a significant length of time. Spelling skills are not impaired. Finger tapping speed results are below normal.

Spatial Dysgraphia is characterized by a defect in the understanding of space, has illegible spontaneously written work, illegible copied work, normal spelling, but normal tapping speed.

What are the Warning Signs of Dysgraphia:

Just having bad handwriting doesn't mean a person has dysgraphia. Since dysgraphia is a processing

disorder, difficulties can change throughout a lifetime. However since writing is a developmental process — children learn the motor skills needed to write, while learning the thinking skills needed to communicate on paper — difficulties can also overlap. The following signs are indicative of dysgraphia at different stages:

In young writers : Illegible handwriting, mixture of cursive and print writing, saying words out loud while writing, concentrating so hard on writing that comprehension of what's written is missed,



trouble thinking of words to write and omitting or not finishing words in sentences.

In young students: Illegible handwriting, mixture of cursive and print writing, saying words out loud while writing, concentrating so hard on writing that comprehension of what's written is missed, trouble thinking of words to write and omitting or not finishing words in sentences

In teenagers and adults: Trouble organizing thoughts on paper, trouble keeping track of thoughts already written down, difficulty with

syntax structure and grammar and, large gap between written ideas and understanding demonstrated through speech

Strategies for Dysgraphia:

There are many ways to help a person with dysgraphia. These strategies fall into three categories:

- 1) Accommodations-providing alternatives to written expression,
- 2) Modification-changing expectations or tasks to minimize or avoid the areas of weakness, and
- 3) Remediation-providing instruction for improving handwriting and writing skills.

Each strategy should be considered since a person with dysgraphia may benefit from any or all of the approaches. Although teachers and employers are required by law to make reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities, they may not know how to help. Information regarding dysgraphia and the different options to address it should be brought to their attention in order to best address these challenge.

