Fact Sheet

How to create a

dyslexia-friendly classroom

A dyslexia-friendly classroom doesn't just benefit students with dyslexia—it creates a more accessible, supportive learning environment for everyone. Most adjustments cost little or nothing to implement. Together, they help reduce unnecessary barriers so students can focus on learning, rather than simply trying to keep up.

What makes a classroom dyslexia-friendly?

A dyslexia-friendly classroom recognises that students learn in different ways. Instead of expecting every learner to access information in the same way, teachers provide multiple ways to learn, participate and demonstrate understanding.

The goal isn't to lower expectations—it's to remove barriers that can prevent students from showing what they know.

"A teacher educated about dyslexia can be the one person who saves a child and their family from years of frustration and anxiety."

- Dr Kelli Sandman-Hurley

1 Create a classroom where every student feels safe to learn

Students with dyslexia often spend much of the school day managing anxiety about reading, writing or making mistakes.

Try some of these to create a supportive classroom.

- Normalise mistakes as part of learning.
- Celebrate effort, persistence and growth—not just correct answers.
- Give students the option to "pass" when reading aloud.
- Encourage self-advocacy by asking students what helps them learn.
- Build opportunities for success by recognising individual strengths.

2 Give instructions that are easy to follow

Try practising these as ways to reduce the load.

- Give one or two instructions at a time.
- Write instructions on the board as well as saying them aloud.
- Use simple, consistent language.
- Model tasks before students begin.
- Pause regularly to allow processing time.
- Check for understanding before moving on.

Did you know?

Reducing teacher talk and increasing modelling often improves understanding for every learner—not just students with dyslexia.

3 Present information clearly

Try these helpful strategies.

- Use clear headings and plenty of white space.
- Break information into manageable chunks.
- Highlight key words rather than entire paragraphs.
- Minimise copying from the board.
- Provide printed or digital notes where possible.
- Use diagrams, visuals and colour coding to reinforce concepts.

4 Offer different ways to show learning

Not every student demonstrates understanding best through lengthy written work.

Options might include

- Oral presentations
- Short videos
- Mind maps
- Photo journals
- Speech-to-text technology
- Audio responses.

The focus should always remain on the learning intention, not the format used to demonstrate it.

5 Make the classroom work for every learner

The physical learning environment also matters.

A dyslexia-friendly classroom might include

- Clear routines and predictable organisation
- Visual timetables
- Clearly labelled resources
- Calm, uncluttered displays
- Appropriate lighting
- Easy access to learning materials
- Technology that students can access independently.

6 Reduce unnecessary barriers

Many of these strategies are examples of reasonable adjustments that help students with dyslexia participate on the same basis as their peers.

Consider

- Extra processing time.
- Flexible deadlines where appropriate.
- Marking content separately from spelling when spelling isn't being assessed.
- Allowing photographs of notes.
- Encouraging assistive technology such as text-to-speech, speech-to-text and C-Pens.
- Allowing audiobooks alongside printed texts.
- Brain breaks during demanding literacy tasks.

Remember

Creating a dyslexia-friendly classroom isn't about doing more. It's about removing unnecessary barriers so every learner has the opportunity to participate, achieve and feel they belong.

7 Build learning around strengths

Learning experiences should challenge students while providing the supports they need to succeed.

Ask yourself

- Can students choose how they complete this task?
- Have I provided enough thinking time?
- Am I assessing learning or handwriting?
- Can every student experience success today?

A dyslexia-friendly classroom checklist

Before today's lesson, ask yourself:

- ☐ Are my instructions clear and visible?
- ☐ Have I reduced unnecessary copying?
- ☐ Can students access information in more than one way?
- ☐ Have I allowed enough processing time?
- ☐ Is there more than one way to demonstrate learning?
- ☐ Will every student have an opportunity to succeed?

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August 2026