



A SPECIFIC LEARNING DIFFERENCE IN MATHS

Dyscalculia

Dyscalculia is a specific learning difference affecting the understanding of numbers and 'number sense' — how someone grasps quantities, arithmetic and estimation — despite ability in other areas.

i Dyscalculia is roughly **as common as dyslexia**, but far less recognised and researched. It says nothing about a person's general intelligence.

👁 How it can present

- Weak 'number sense' — difficulty instantly seeing how many without counting
- Estimating quantities, time, distance or money
- Recalling number facts and times tables; relying on counting
- Counting backwards, sequencing and understanding place value
- Telling the time, budgeting and sense of direction
- Maths anxiety, low confidence and frustration

☑ What helps — supportive approaches

- ✓ Multi-sensory, concrete–pictorial–abstract maths teaching
- ✓ Manipulatives and number lines to make quantity visible
- ✓ Reducing reliance on memory — number squares and fact cards
- ✓ Allowing calculators and assistive tools
- ✓ Over-learning, repetition with understanding and extra time
- ✓ Reducing time pressure to ease maths anxiety

📍 UK CONTEXT

5–6%

About 5–6% of people — roughly 1 in 20 — have dyscalculia: as common as dyslexia, but far less widely recognised.

British Dyslexia Association / NHS

★ Strengths often seen

- ★ Often strong language and verbal skills
- ★ Creativity and intuitive, big-picture thinking
- ★ Strategic, qualitative reasoning
- ★ Learning well through doing and demonstration
- ★ Finding effective personal 'work-arounds'

🕒 Finding assessment & support in the UK

- 1 Dyscalculia is an educational, not a medical, diagnosis — a GP does not diagnose it
- 2 Start with the school SENCo and SEN Support — no diagnosis is needed to begin help
- 3 A full assessment is carried out by a specialist assessor (Level 7 / AMBDA) or an Educational Psychologist
- 4 The British Dyslexia Association offers guidance and information
- 5 Request an EHC needs assessment / EHCP where needs are greater

Please note — this sheet provides general information only. It is not a diagnostic tool and is not a substitute for individual assessment or professional advice. Every person is unique; if you have concerns about yourself or a child, please speak with a suitably qualified professional.

Sources & further information: British Dyslexia Association · NHS · National Numeracy · House of Lords Library (2025)