



A SPECIFIC DIFFERENCE IN WRITTEN EXPRESSION

Dysgraphia

Dysgraphia is a specific learning difference affecting written expression – which can include handwriting (letter formation, spacing and legibility), spelling, and putting thoughts into written words.

i **A note on terms:** in the UK 'dysgraphia' is a useful description rather than a formal standalone diagnosis. It overlaps with DCD/dyspraxia (the motor side) and dyslexia (spelling and written language); some specialists prefer 'specific handwriting difficulties'.

How it can present

- Slow, effortful or hard-to-read handwriting; messy presentation
- Inconsistent letter formation, sizing and spacing; reversals
- Awkward pencil grip or posture; hand ache or fatigue when writing
- A clear gap between spoken ideas and what reaches the page
- Spelling, punctuation and copying from the board
- Organising and sequencing written work

What helps – supportive approaches

- ✓ Assistive technology – typing, word processing and speech-to-text
- ✓ Alternatives to handwriting for capturing ideas (scribing, voice notes, mind-maps)
- ✓ Occupational therapy for the motor and handwriting aspects
- ✓ Pencil grips and sloped boards; reduced copying and extra time
- ✓ Planning frames and templates to scaffold written work
- ✓ Separating idea-generation from the physical act of writing

UK CONTEXT

10–30%

Precise UK prevalence isn't well established; international studies suggest 10–30% of children find writing hard, varying by how it is defined.

International research (not a separate UK diagnosis)

Strengths often seen

- ✦ Strong spoken and oral expression and ideas
- ✦ Creativity and the ability to visualise
- ✦ Big-picture and lateral thinking
- ✦ Good visual-spatial awareness
- ✦ Knowledge that outstrips written output

Finding assessment & support in the UK

- 1 Start with the school SENCo – support can begin under SEN Support without a formal label
- 2 An Educational Psychologist or specialist assessor can assess underlying needs
- 3 NHS occupational therapy (via GP or school) for handwriting and motor aspects
- 4 Exam access arrangements (extra time, a laptop or a scribe) where evidenced
- 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: NHS · British Dyslexia Association · Dyspraxia Foundation · Chung et al. (2020)