

What is Dysgraphia?

Parent Fact Sheet

Dysgraphia is a specific learning difficulty that affects written expression. A child may have strong ideas and understand lesson content, but find it hard to get those ideas onto the page clearly, quickly and accurately. Dysgraphia can involve handwriting, spelling, sentence construction, planning, organisation and the physical effort of writing.

Common signs of dysgraphia

- Writing is slow, tiring or physically uncomfortable.
- Handwriting may be messy, inconsistent, poorly spaced or difficult to read.
- The child may know what they want to say but write very little.
- Spelling, punctuation and sentence structure may break down during writing tasks.
- Copying from the board or a worksheet may be slow and inaccurate.
- Written work may not reflect the child's oral language, knowledge or reasoning.

Dysgraphia can affect

- Handwriting formation, sizing and spacing.
- Writing speed and stamina.
- Spelling while composing sentences.
- Planning and organising ideas.
- Grammar, punctuation and sentence structure.
- Confidence and willingness to attempt writing.

Helpful supports

- Reduce copying demands when the goal is content knowledge.
- Allow oral responses, scribing or speech-to-text where appropriate.
- Teach writing in small, explicit steps with models.
- Use graphic organisers and sentence frames.
- Build handwriting or keyboarding fluency separately.
- Assess ideas separately from handwriting neatness when possible.

Dyslexia and dysgraphia: similarities and differences

Area	Dyslexia	Dysgraphia
Main difficulty	Reading, spelling and language-based word learning.	Written expression, handwriting, spelling on paper, written organisation or transcription.
Often noticed as	Slow or inaccurate word reading, poor decoding, weak spelling, reading fatigue.	Messy or effortful handwriting, slow writing, poor spacing, difficulty getting ideas onto paper.
Shared features	Both can affect spelling, written work, confidence, speed and school output.	Both can affect spelling, written work, confidence, speed and school output.
What support targets	Structured literacy: phonology, decoding, spelling patterns, morphology, fluency and comprehension.	Writing support: handwriting/typing, sentence structure, planning, spelling routines and reducing copying load.

Can a child have both?

- Yes. Dyslexia and dysgraphia can occur together, but they are not the same difficulty.
- A child with dyslexia may struggle with spelling and written work because word reading and spelling are hard.
- A child with dysgraphia may struggle with written output even when reading is stronger than writing.
- Assessment helps identify whether the main barrier is reading/spelling, handwriting/transcription, written language organisation, or a combination.

How O-G Reading Clinic can help

We support students by strengthening the literacy foundations that affect written work: phonology, spelling patterns, morphology, sentence-level skills, fluency and confidence. We can also help families understand when school adjustments, occupational therapy input or further assessment may be appropriate.

Structured literacy support • Parent-friendly guidance • Individualised intervention