10 Ways to Manage Dyslexia at University

What is Dyslexia?
Dyslexia impacts on reading, writing, spelling or comprehending written words. It is part of a group of conditions referred to as Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD). It is estimated that one out of every ten people have a SLD, with Dyslexia being the most common, affecting about 80% of people with SLD. It is likely that someone close to you, or someone you sit next to in class or someone who teaches you may have Dyslexia.

Specific learning disabilities (SLD) refers to a group of conditions that are identified by unexpected underachievement in specific parts of the learning process such as spelling, writing, mathematics, decoding and comprehending written information. It is unexpected because the area of difficulty is specific and inconsistent with the person’s overall ability.

What is the impact of Dyslexia?
While the experience of Dyslexia can be very different for different people, generally it presents a few extra challenges for University students. For example, it can make getting through required readings a much longer and more exhaustive task than for the average student. It can mean that trying to remember lots of word-based and new concepts or ideas, feels overwhelming. It also can increase anxiety about participating in class, particularly if there is a possibility of needing to read in front of others. There is also concern about being marked down for spelling and grammar in examinations or assessments where access to assistive software may be limited.

Despite these challenges, many regard their Dyslexia as a gift!

Dyslexia can provide a different perspective for seeing and comprehending information that has been found to offer some distinct advantages. People with Dyslexia tend to be able to think more creatively and more easily see the bigger picture. They may have better visual processing ability which means they can be more skilled at recognising the connections within complex situations such as mentally manipulating three dimensional objects. While the written word may not be their forte, they can often excel in oral discussions.

Dyslexia and University Study
There are a number of strategies that can be helpful in managing dyslexia at university. Here are ten helpful suggestions for UTas students with Dyslexia.

1. **Understand your strengths** - consider what helps you to be at your best with regards to studying. Do you see the big picture? Are you a visual learner? Do you look for patterns? Do you easily link concepts together? Are you a good orator? Explore learning tools that can help you make the most of your learning strengths such as mind maps, images, creative graphics or storytelling.

2. **Use assistive technology** – to help you with reading and writing. UTas provides free access to Read and Write software that can read text, check grammar and spelling, and organise and proof written work. You can also use freely available apps such as Grammarly and inbuilt Microsoft or Mac apps to proof your work

3. **Get on-campus assistance with your studies** – Make an appointment with a Student Advisor to help you with time management, study strategies, navigating processes, or discuss other issues that may be impacting on your studies. Book a Student Learning consultation with a Student Learning...
Adviser to help you develop academic skills such as writing assignments and exam preparation. They can also advise you on using Read and Write.

4. Get on-line assistance with your studies - Studiosity is a 24 hour study help service free to UTas students. You upload your written work by clicking on the Studiosity link in MyLO, then you’ll get feedback with comments and suggestions within 24 hours. They can also give you general hints and tips about academic writing, and foundation concepts in maths, stats, science and accounting.

5. Plan for each unit - download a copy of the Unit Outline and mark all the assessment tasks. Colour code the tasks where you may need extra considerations such as extended due dates. Especially mark any assessment tasks that may be problematic for you – like taking notes during field trips or doing verbal presentations in front of your peers. Make a time when you and your coordinator can meet to discuss the impact of your SLD on that unit of study and the content of your Learning Access Plan (if you have one).

6. Ask for adjustments – if you have a learning disability diagnosis from an Educational/Developmental Psychologist you can book an appointment to meet with one of the Disability Advisors to discuss your specific needs at UTas. They can develop a Learning Access Plan with you that may include electronic access to essential written texts, considerations in exam situations, and accessing assistive technology.

7. Nurture a growth mindset - embrace a ‘not there yet’ approach as sometimes, despite your best efforts, you may not always achieve the results you hope for. Nurture a growth mindset which helps to view failures and setbacks as a sign that you’re ‘not there yet’ and an opportunity to learn better strategies, or reach out to others who may be able to help. ‘Not there yet’ moments can be essential in building skills, determination and resilience.

8. Apply for a scholarship – the Gilbertson Family Scholarship provides financial support for UTas students with specific learning disability. This support can be used for regular one to one tutoring, or assistive technology.

9. Connect with others – the UTas LD Legends is a dynamic group of students with specific learning disability who come together on a regular basis to share their experiences of study and helpful strategies to overcome challenges. For more information about the group contact Disability.Services@utas.edu.au

10. Be assessed – if you don’t have a formal assessment but suspect that you may have a specific learning disability you can make an appointment with a Disability Advisor to discuss your options for assessment.