



Dyslexia International – Tools and Technologies ASBL

building learning abilities

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Newsletter

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Double-take – a new D-I-T-T e-book duo



Illustration by Quentin Blake from the *basic guide*

Maybe a world first?

You can find this e-book duo – *Dyslexia here and there*, devised by Pauline Key-Kairis, in two versions on the D-I-T-T Web site, with a foreword written by D-I-T-T Patron HRH Princess Margaretha of Liechtenstein:

Dyslexia here and there: a basic guide for parents, an e-book with illustrations by Quentin Blake, and

Dyslexia here and there: a do-it-yourself guide kit, a text version that can be used in a word processor for adapting, translating or editing *à la carte*.

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D-I-T-T volunteers work with leading experts, creating and promoting tools that enable dyslexic learners to succeed in a competitive world

Dyslexia here and there: a basic guide for parents is especially helpful for parents who have recently had their child assessed and who may be feeling bewildered and in need of information and guidance.

It suggests ways of coping with the necessary adjustments, and gives an authentic definition of dyslexia and important suggestions such as the need for health checkups for sight, hearing and muscle-control. There are also tips that are relevant to all concerned: the importance of avoiding cola drinks, being aware of the tiredness factor, and the usefulness of colour-coding school books.

Parents living abroad will want to take special note of the sections dealing with culture shock or having to learn a new language.

A key feature of the *basic guide* is the D-I-T-T Checklist – an invaluable tool when it comes to selecting the best school for your child. Parents can print out as many copies as they need, and fill one in for each school they phone or visit. Questions include:

- Are the staff qualified to teach dyslexic children?
- How often are the children assessed?
- How is progress monitored?

The Checklist enables parents to keep a precise record of what resources and education each school can offer. Put together, they can then be used for comparison and a basis for choice when it comes to selecting the best-fit school.

Dyslexia here and there: a basic guide for parents is in PDF format which means you can save it onto your hard disk by clicking the link on the Web site to view whenever you like.

But that's not all!

The ***Dyslexia here and there: a do-it-yourself guide kit*** complements the *basic guide* as a tool designed for use by local dyslexia self-help support groups, wherever they are, wanting to make their own guide that will include local information specific to their needs.

The *do-it-yourself guide kit* is the text of the *basic guide for parents* as a word-processing file. It makes suggestions on what information it might be useful to add such as local IT resources, diagnostic centres, teacher trainings, and local legal rights and entitlements, such as use of lap-tops, spell-checkers and extra time in exams.

Save the file to your hard disk and then you can use it to adapt and/or translate into your very own guide. Sadly we can't offer you Quentin Blake's lovely illustrations as they are copyright, but everything else is there for you to take or leave.

A word about D-I-T-T's E-books...

If you haven't already discovered the delights of e-books in PDF form, here are some of the features it offers. You can:

- enlarge the page as much as you like
- find the beginning of a particular section with the bookmarks
- find a page you remember the look of with the thumbnails
- search for a particular word or phrase
- print out selected pages – especially useful for the Checklist!

and, of course, don't forget that in any program you can adjust your monitor to the brightness level you like to work with.

The original printed version of the Guide (*Children with Specific Learning Difficulties*) was a post-conference document, written by Judith Sanson in 1994, based on the research of parents, teachers and psychologists in Brussels. It was devised as a prototype – to be adapted for any language-group in any country, since the questions are universal. Thanks to technology, and the ingenious design, it is now available in these twinned versions.

Dyslexia here and there: a basic guide for parents

Page-size A4; 34 pages with full-colour illustrations by Quentin Blake; Adobe Acrobat PDF format – file size 222 KB

Dyslexia here and there: a do-it-yourself guide kit

Page-size A4; RTF format (suitable for Microsoft Word) – file size 88 KB

Both available on: www.ditt-online.org



Another of Quentin Blake's lovely illustrations from the *basic guide*

Projects

Roadmap to success – New BBC production team

D·I·T·T is indebted to Gail Block for her outstanding design for Roadmap to Success in Phase One. On 27 February members of the D·I·T·T team welcomed Carlton Reeve, lead BBC producer, and Michael Brodbin who will now take the project forward through Phase Two.

Warmest thanks go to Peter Horemans and his staff at Moulinsart for their generous co-operation.

D·I·T·T was pleased to welcome Joe Franses of our sponsors Cable and Wireless who attended a meeting on 24 January in Brussels on the launch and distribution

Michael Brodbin (on the left) and Carlton Reeve



Language shock – dyslexia across cultures multimedia pack

The Italian e-book version of the Guide is now up on our Web site.

Celebrations follow! The full Pack of BBC video and printed guide in Italian, with a chapter by leading Italian experts, is planned.

Lobbying 2003 – the European Year of People with Disabilities



Viviane Reding, European Commission Education and Culture department (EAC)

Mrs Reding, Member of the European Commission, invited the public to respond to a questionnaire, saying ‘Please take advantage of this opportunity to contribute to our thinking.’ She spoke of ‘including the definition of common objectives for European education and training up to the year 2010.’ She went on to say ‘We want to know the views, wishes and ambitions of all our stakeholders, programme participants and potential participants – before the Commission puts forward its formal proposal for the new phase of programme action to start in 2007.’

D·I·T·T submitted a reply suggesting a radical re-think of current practice in programme management and of course

emphasis on inclusion, stressing the importance of delivery on policies and improving the chances of equal opportunity for the international child with learning disabilities.

Hand in hand with inclusion goes essential teacher training to ensure the teacher has every chance of

- recognising any learning difficulties, and
- having the technique and methodologies to cope so that all children succeed in whatever they can.

Press

Thanks go to the *EuReporter*, which carried three illustrated articles heralding professor John Stein’s visit to Brussels to speak at the Parliament.

Ability Magazine UK

D·I·T·T provided a full feature and front cover article with contributions by Andy (see the first D·I·T·T e-Newsletter for his story) and Robin, D·I·T·T volunteer currently reviewing software for the *Roadmap to Success* project.



Look out for the March issue – see the [Ability Magazine Web site!](http://www.abilitymagazine.co.uk) (www.abilitymagazine.co.uk)



DITT Board Member writes from Sweden:

It is often a personal experience that causes people to work with dyslexia, and so it is for me. I grew up with two dyslexic siblings, an older sister and a younger brother. The feeling of guilt for being 'normal' probably never disappears, just as the siblings' envy will never disappear. Even though my mother searched and found help for my siblings, this never breached the gap between us. As a teenager I stopped studying and barely made it through school. Today I understand the reason, but at the time my situation was not understood.

My parents were very happy and hardly ever quarrelled until my brother began to show signs of ADHD and dyslexia and could not follow regular classes at school. It is now common knowledge that children with these problems cause enormous tension within the family. In my case this was most certainly true. I am so sorry that my

parents had to endure the hardship and feel such anguish over my brother and sister. They felt that it was their fault somehow, and there were countless conflicts between my lenient mother and my less lenient father. Learning disabilities quite clearly cause much more widespread damage than just difficulties with reading.

Fortunately, circumstances brought me to Berkeley, California in 1970. There I went back to school to undo the harm that my neglected studies in Sweden had caused. I went on to receive a B.A. as an honours student from UC Berkeley. This in itself helped to give me the self-confidence to apply for Graduate School, though I had difficulty choosing a program of study.

One day, which I never will forget, I was walking across campus and my eyes fell on an announcement for a course on 'Learning Disabilities and Reading Difficulties'. The first lecture was a complete revelation, and I realised that the professor knew how people with dyslexia can be taught to read and write. This was news to me, but because my dyslexic sister's oldest son had begun to have difficulties in school, I was very motivated to find out how this was done. I walked straight up the professor and asked if I could sit in on his course.

The rest is history. Since that day, I have been fascinated by learning disabilities and especially dyslexia and reading. After Graduate School and subsequent training, I maintained a private practice in New York City for many years.

After thirty years in the USA my husband's work brought me back to Europe and Brussels. There I met Judith Sanson who has worked tirelessly to organise the dyslexia framework for others to work within; first ECIC and then D·I·T·T. She pulled me into the workforce when the first guide was being written and enrolled me as a board member in D·I·T·T. It is truly an honour to be part of this dyslexia group.

Since my return to Sweden six years ago, I spent three years as a full time Ph.D. candidate at the Karolinska Institute's department of neurophysiology. My focus has been on a diagnostic battery, capable of revealing dyslexia before children start school. Simultaneously, I modified this test-battery to suit school age children and adults.

At present, I share my time between teaching English and Reading at a school for dyslexic students and as dyslexia specialist at the Karolinska Institute Medical University in Stockholm. The work goes on and let me tell you that 'there has never been a dull moment'.

Mind Maps for Kids

New! *Mind Maps for Kids*, a colourful book by Tony Buzan, with models for use in different subjects for note-taking and exam preparation. Very thorough and accessible, this publication is recommended on the Senco Forum (see D·I·T·T Newsletter No.2, Winter 2000, page 7)

Sight-sound technology

Robin Truyen, a special education teacher with inside knowledge, D·I·T·T member and volunteer, explains the advantage of two models of sight-sound technology:

Text Help's Wordsmith v2

The English language has 44 different phonemes, but only 20 graphemes to represent them. No wonder so many people struggle with spelling it!

Yet the burden of spelling and writing can be lightened by using appropriate software. A programme that might well help the dyslexic writer is a piece of computer software called Text Help's Wordsmith v2.

Wordsmith functions by means of a tool bar that is added to the word processor, enabling the user to access as many as eight different features to help the writer in distress. The 'speech feature' might be considered to be the most useful of them all, as it reads while you type, making it possible for the writer to actually hear his or her mistakes, and have the computer read and re-read words, sentences and paragraphs.

Also, those who are always struggling with homophones may find this software helpful since, amongst other possibilities, it allows the user to conduct a search for homonyms and to hear a spoken definition with sample sentences.

People who have problems with finding the right word, or are in doubt about the correct meaning of a word can rely on the inbuilt dictionary. This contains the description of 180.000 words, illustrated with sample sentences. The programme is also capable of predicting words. But it should be mentioned here that this function for the most part suggests prepositions, conjunctions, and such.

For those who are still at a loss for words, Word Wizard might be a good ally as it is capable of finding the word the writer wants to use.

Another very important feature, the Spell Checker, is a marvellous tool that shows up errors in colour. All suggestions can be spoken. Although the Spell Checker does recognise a lot of spelling errors, the dyslexic user must not see it as an ultimate check for finding every right spelling for each word he has written down.

For some people, especially those whose mother-tongue is not English, there may be additional problems as quite often the system will not recognise all the phonetic spelling mistakes.

But a very positive feature of the programme is that it enables parents and teachers to monitor the spelling programmes as the errors are registered by the system, and individual settings can be saved. Furthermore, Wordsmith v2 is capable of scanning documents. It contains a pronunciation tutor and is capable of reading internet pages.

System requirements: Pentium 350 or above; Microsoft Word 97, 2000 or XP; 128 MB of RAM; 400 MB disk space; Sound card; Speakers.

The Kurzweil 3000 v6

Kurzweil 3000 v6 is the latest PC-based reading system of sight and sound technology. As this programme has a wide range of possibilities, only the most important ones will be mentioned here. One of its biggest advantages is that it is multi-lingual, carrying as it does six languages: Dutch, English, French, German, Italian and Spanish.

Apart from helping dyslexics who are writing in their mother-tongue, this software is also very useful for those who are studying foreign languages. All definitions, examples, voices and so on are available in the six languages mentioned above.

At a speed that can be adapted, the programme reads words, sentences or paragraphs, so enabling the user to correct his or her mistakes whenever he or she hears them. The word prediction facility, together with the multilingual definitions and synonyms that can be requested directly from the very clear toolbar, are user-friendly and accessible – helping the student with some flexibility as it can be modified to suit different tasks. It can for example help the writer with proofreading, content reading and fluency training.

The spellchecker is excellent and recognises a wide range of mistakes even those made by non-native speakers of English using the English mode.

Kurzweil 3000v6 also offers other features to help with reading and writing. First of all there is the possibility to change background colour, and secondly the programme is capable of reading scanned or downloaded texts. Apart from helping the user with spelling and reading, the programme can also be used to structure documents by using 4 different colours.

The Kurzweil 3000 v6 has a lot more different features and really is a very helpful tool for dyslexics.

The only really negative point is its price tag as, at the time of writing, the full-colour version of Scan and Read for PC costs £851.88, VAT included.

Second language learning and teaching

Anny Cooremans, headmistress, teacher trainer, author, D-I-T-T member and consultant to the BBC CD-rom, speaks about her own experience of teaching dyslexic Dutch pupils foreign languages at secondary school age.

Her school of 70 pupils between 8 and 14, approved by the Dutch-speaking government, is situated outside Leuven in Belgium. Here pupils are offered a provenly effective, intensive one- or two-year remedial programme.

They may have dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, ADD en ADHD, Asperger syndrome, a non-verbal learning disability, or they may be underachieving bright children or subject to other problems such as difficulties with integrating. But all children will have an average or above WISQ-IQ: (T-IQ and V-IQ above 100).

Mutual support - children working in groups

Children are taught in groups rather than individually. Dyslexic children with severe delay in reading as compared to the group are seen individually, once a day for a period of ten minutes. During class, pupils learn to tutor other pupils and to use remedial programs on the computer.

After the initial training, pupils invariably do really well in helping to tutor each other. They gain in self-confidence and become more aware of their special needs and those of others in a very natural and motivated way.

Homework

Homework is based on individual remedial exercises in reading, writing, arithmetic skills and training of vocabulary of the compulsory foreign languages (French and English) with exercises on the computer. Parents are trained to do reading exercises and give support by sticking to a regular time table and motivating the child. This extra homework gives results.

Compensatory techniques

Part of the programme and, integrated in all subjects, is intensive support in learning to use compensatory techniques. We focus on techniques useful for higher education: word processing and computer aided techniques, reading skills depending on what purpose you are reading - for fun, research or deeper understanding; time management, using rulebooks and mnemonics to aid spelling and arithmetic; where to go for appropriate help and support; understanding your own special needs and learning style; learning to cope with failure and your disabilities.

Dutch and foreign languages

Dutch, the school language, is quite phonetic. Nevertheless, dyslexic children will have severe difficulties, being, on average, two or three years behind their peer group. For French and English, competent writing skills are compulsory to make the grade at O- and A-levels. But no special adjustments or provisions are made for pupils with dyslexia in the normal schools, beyond what the classroom teacher understands about the learning difficulties and his or her willingness to adapt. Dyslexic pupils need a lot of support to achieve even minimum goals in these languages.

Speaking and understanding English is easier than French, as most television programmes and computer programs are in English. But French, in Dutch-speaking Belgium, presents a real problem. Pupils are continually de-motivated as they face one failure after another in reading and writing. Even understanding may be difficult too. However, it was these motivational problems with French that provided the starting point for a new experiment:

Secondary school: integrated teaching of foreign languages

Two years ago, we started teaching the three languages: Dutch, French and English all together, instead of teaching them separately.

First, we developed new school material appropriate for this age-group (12-13 year) capable of sustaining motivation and attention. Dialogues and magazine materials would not sustain the attention long enough. We had to find subjects integrating activity, stories and relevant knowledge or information.

The Radio Lesson is one example: We present the text in the three languages well-spaced with big letter-type and pictures. Dutch is the basic language of reference so, to help pupils to understand every word they are trying to learn, we use Dutch text for strategies for reading techniques (quick survey reading, syllable reading and others) and for proper writing (preparing dictation and using spelling control techniques). The texts are straightforward – without any particular difficulties.

We start by learning the text by heart after an extensive discussion on strategies. We motivate the students to use their memory, and give psychological information about memory processes and different kinds of memories. We use auditory and visual techniques as well as motor skills. We emphasise different rhythms of learning, over-learning, practice and the normal loss of information without practice. The problems of learning by heart and poor memory are discussed in the group as well as individually.

Pupils learn to control their knowledge for themselves and to manage several ways of learning a text: oral presentation, written presentation, with or without help of the Dutch text of the pictures or key-words.

All pupils make progress, but they don't make the same progress on each aspect. We discuss these differences in the group and encourage pupils to think about their own learning skills.

Now pupils are encouraged to tutor another pupil or to ask for tutoring and discuss the process amongst themselves. The slower pupils are encouraged to help the quicker pupils and vice versa.

This stage of learning by heart in group and discussing one's own capacities and difficulties is a challenging period for children whose past experiences in a language subject may have been disastrous for their confidence and left them isolated. Now they will monitor themselves and each other, discussing problems and progress with peers, and acquiring a new language in a less stressful environment.

Vocabulary

Moving on from this stage, we teach strategies for learning vocabulary lists and discuss the different types of learning difficulties and the problems they will encounter in this area.

The basic texts contain basic sentences and vocabulary chosen so it may be used in other contexts too.

Once children know the text by heart they can change words and make a new meaningful text in the foreign language: we allow them to use electronic dictionaries and additional help for spelling. Personal examples may be given.

The pupil gains in academic self-confidence. Moreover, the goals can be different for each pupil: one is asked only to know the oral presentation, the other one has to know the written too and even be prepared to teach a group.

Pupils are invited to compare vocabulary and spelling in all three languages. They are encouraged to find ways to show the differences in overviews. We do not emphasise this aspect, but just invite pupils to observe, discover and compare. Later on, they will compare in a more structured way and learn to use their memory more for structure than for details.

Grammar skills

Grammar is very important in learning French for academic purposes. Accurate French spelling is based on a fundamental knowledge of grammar. Dutch spelling too can improve by using spelling rules as can English, despite its many anomalies. So, integrating spelling rules and grammar basics are important at this stage.

The pupils learn the basic rule and are made aware of nouns, verbs and other parts of speech. Rules are discussed and comparisons made.

In summary, the techniques involved in this provenly successful we use at our school are:

- lively interaction
- overlearning
- using all kinds of sensory input
- starting from the familiar
- comparing
- training memory
- training in relevant knowledge/content
- training learning strategies.

2003 Annual General Meeting & Open Forum Lecture

This year's AGM will take place at rue Defacqz at 12.30 on 7 May.

Members of D·I·T·T will receive an agenda, annual report and accounts.

To join D·I·T·T and support the all-volunteer team in developing its projects, please print out, fill in and send us the [Membership form](#) that is on the Web site.

On the same afternoon of 7 May, Oxford Professor John Stein will speak at the European Parliament (see page 11). Please note and post details of this important annual open forum wherever you can. D·I·T·T is grateful to John Corrie, MEP, himself dyslexic, for his support in putting on this event.

Lee Pascal



On Wednesday 19 March Lee Pascal, expert in study skills and exam techniques, spoke on 'Overcoming the Horrors of Homework,' following Susan van Alsenoy's presentation of her excellent world-wide research on top teaching techniques for classroom teachers. Copies of Susan's presentation notes are available through the D·I·T·T office.

For laughter, encouragement, and cutting through to the perspective of the learner with difficulties, Lee is the right person.

He put across the misery of the dyslexic child with difficulties trapped in failure by being assigned too much to learn, teased when asking for help or told to learn without any indication on how to carry out the tasks assigned.

Lee illustrated the importance of multi-sensory teaching, making use of all paths to the brain. He demonstrated the folly of putting the struggling learner in the position of failure, and sabotaging family relations. In fact, if Lee had his way, homework would be banned. Study clubs and homework get-togethers in neighbouring homes could, he says, provide the lively discussion and interactivity so often frowned on, but which is often the very way the dyslexic learner enriches his learning capacity.

New special needs education database

The European Agency for Development and Special Needs Education is making progress with setting up a new database that provides information on policies, practices, national overviews, research information, publications, contact details and much more.

Over the past two years the European Agency has been working on the topic of transition from school to employment and the problems, and possibilities faced by young people with special educational needs: www.european-agency.org



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A lecture by Professor John Stein, FRCP

Professor of Physiology at the University of Oxford

‘Genes, wobbly eyes, coloured filters and fish – the brain basis of reading difficulties’

Wednesday 7 May 2003, European Parliament, Brussels

Sponsored by John Alexander Corrie, MEP

In the late afternoon of 7 May 2003, at the invitation of D-I-T-T, John Stein, Professor of Physiology at the University of Oxford, will visit Brussels to give a lecture as part of D-I-T-T’s continuing series of Symposia on Brain Function.

10% of children have unexpected difficulty learning to read and spell properly despite having normal intelligence; this is often known as developmental dyslexia because it is now known to have a neurodevelopmental basis. In dyslexics genetic, immunological and nutritional factors seem to interact to impair the development of the specialised brain systems that mediate the visual/orthographic and auditory/phonological transformations that are required to read successfully. However this is often associated with superior talents in other spheres. Dyslexia is not a disease but a brain difference. Our newer understanding has helped us to generate new, highly effective, means of helping dyslexics to achieve normal literacy.

Professor Stein studied Physiology at New College, Oxford, then Clinical Medicine at St. Thomas’s Hospital, London. He continued his training in Neurology in London, Leicester and Oxford. But he decided that neurological research might be more useful, and he was appointed tutor in medicine at Magdalen College in 1970. Since then, in addition to teaching, he has been studying normal and abnormal eye and limb movement control in animals, neurological patients and dyslexics. He began to study the role of eye control in dyslexics in 1978, and has been pursuing the hypothesis that dyslexics’ problems may result from impaired low-level perceptual visuomotor and auditory processing that is caused by abnormal development of magnocellular neurones in the brain. His brother, Rick Stein, the TV chef, does not do neuroscience. John Stein does not cook!

D-I-T-T’s mission is to bring full awareness of the problems associated with dyslexia into the educational systems of the EU member states and beyond, and to improve remedial help by making effective assessment and training available to all.

For more information about the lecture, please contact the D-I-T-T office.

Susan Calamassi, *D-I-T-T Board Member*

Money matters

Great news for donors to D-I-T-T's current project *Roadmap to Success*

This project is now officially recognised by the Roi Baudouin Foundation. Gifts of €30 or more made through the Foundation account No.000-0000004-04 mentioning L79549, Dyslexia International – Tools and Technologies (D-I-T-T) are tax deductible.

Please let all potential donors and sponsors know!

Information for potential sponsors

D-I-T-T is now looking for funding to progress its projects – sponsors who want to be associated with a world-class production – and Tintin and Snowy on the *Roadmap to Success*. Two documents outline our position and are available to potential sponsors:

D-I-T-T – Mission·Organisation·Projects, which gives an overview and budgets for all four main strands of activity: informing, promoting, creating and administering

Roadmap to Success – Web site development, which looks at planning for the next five years

D-I-T-T awaits news of a major prize through organised by a major foundation in France. Fingers crossed!

Reflections

On dyslexia ...

'Some people are widely read. I'm thinly read because I'm partially dyslexic. I was fully dyslexic until I met someone who was more dyslexic than me who said *You're only partially dyslexic*. There is a lot of rivalry in the dyslexia camp. Rivalry with three v's.'

Eddie Izzard

On ICT...

Ringin' true –the advantages of ICT highlighted recently by Compaq:

- with the growth of ICT and education, the very nature of teaching and learning is changing;
- the use of computers does so much to raise self-esteem and motivation - to raise standards;
- the speed with which pupils have taken to technology and used it to best advantage is staggering. There are no two ways about it – they love it;
- a good ICT infrastructure frees teachers to concentrate on the business of teaching, rather than spending valuable time researching ICT solutions.

Where dyslexic learners often shine

- Lateral thinking
- Creativity
- Imaginative ways of working
- Quick thinking
- Knowledge and skills that are not compartmentalised
- Having many strands of thought simultaneously
- Keen sensory awareness
- Spatial relationships
- Visualising
- Using shapes and patterns
- Mathematical computation
- Colour sensitivity
- Singing and music
- All forms of artistic expression
- Expressing feeling and emotions
- Constructional and technical activities.

Extract from 'Teaching today,' staff development primary education BBC booklet

On success ...

'Success seems to be largely the matter of hanging on after the others have let go.'

William Feather

'Failure is success if we learn from it.'

Malcolm S. Forbes