

Making materials dyslexia-accessible

I've been working on dyslexia-accessible materials for over ten years as a writer and editor. In that time, I've worked on range of resources for dyslexic students and have built up a bank of rules and tips for making materials accessible.

When I share these rules, I find people have a similar reaction: Why don't we do this for all our students? This would be good for everyone. And I couldn't agree more. This is the essence of inclusive education for me. All students benefit from materials that are clear and easy to follow.

Check out the tips and rules below to learn more.

Some general rules

1. There are lots of simple changes we can make to materials to make them more accessible. This [dyslexia-friendly style guide](#) is really clear guide to kind of simple changes that you can make.
2. Use a one column format. This keeps the page easy to follow and there are fewer visual distractions for the learner.
3. Keep rubrics simple. Avoid italic in rubrics. So...

Not: Complete the text using the correct form of the present simple.

Instead: Complete the text. Use the correct form of the present simple.

4. Always include an example.
5. Ensure rules are long enough for students to write the answer on.
6. Minimize the amount of writing students have to do.
7. Don't use exercises that have students transform sentences, e.g. Rewrite the sentence using the present perfect.
8. Don't use exercises that have students doing two things, e.g. Complete the sentence. Does the sentence use (P) the present simple or (PC) the present continuous? Write P or PC.

Exercise types suitable for dyslexic learners

Mind maps, diagrams and image-based activities are useful to dyslexic learners. There are other variations on traditional exercise types that have been used on dyslexia-accessible projects I've worked on. I've given a few examples below.

Matching exercise

Notes: Set the two columns of options in a table. To avoid having students draw lines to match, students can write a letter or use different colour to highlight matching items.

Match (1–4) to (A-E). Write the letter.

0 go <u>E</u> [example on rule]	A board games
1 play [R1]	B a book
2 watch [R1]	C TV
3 read [R1]	D shopping

Option based exercises

Option-based exercises can be a great accessible way to check understanding whilst minimizing writing. It's worth noting that some argue multiple choice with three or more options can be too challenging.

1 Slashed options

Notes: Put options in bold.

Circle the correct word.

1 I **go** / **goes** swimming every day.

2 A/B/C options

Notes: Students circle the correct option or tick a tick box.

Circle the correct option.

1 I _____ swimming every day.

A go B goes C going

Sentence completion

I've seen gapfill activities used for short texts and dialogues. Some people suggest using only one-word items in wordpools not phrases, but I have seen this used with phrases.

1 Sentence Completion from wordpool

Notes: On the first project I worked on, we lettered the words in the word pool and students wrote the letter.

Complete the sentence with the words.

1 The cat bear elephant fish monkey swims in the sea.

Complete the sentence with the words.

1 The _____ swims in the sea.

cat
bear
elephant
fish
monkey

2 Sentence Completion from brackets

Notes: Put the item in brackets in bold. Some people advise putting the bracket before the rule.

Complete the sentence. Use the past simple form of the verb in brackets.

1 We _____ (**swim**) in the sea yesterday.

3 Sentence completion (word in rubric)

Notes: Don't use italics in the rubric. Use different font colour or weight.

Complete the sentence with in, on or at.

1 We swam in the sea _____ Friday.