

## Ten Study Tips for Junior Certificate Students with Dyslexia

### Wyn McCormack

1. **Colour code your timetable, giving each subject a different colour.** Do several copies: one for the locker, the homework journal, your study area. Put in the name of your teacher and classroom the first time you put in a subject. It could look like this.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
English R. 2 Ms Daly	Home Ec. Kitchen Ms Daly	Science	Maths	Science
Maths R. 14 Ms. Carroll	Home Ec.	Art	Religion	Home Ec.
History R. 4 Ms Keogh	English	Art	PE	Home Ec.
Geography R. 23 Ms. Kelly	PE Ms. Wilson	Maths	Irish	Art
Science Lab Mr. Dunne	CSPE R. 5 Mr. Boland	Business	Business	English
Science	Business R. 16 Mr. Malone	Business	Science	Irish
Art Room Ms. Walsh	Irish R. 8 Ms. Grey	Irish	English	Geography
Art	Maths	English	SPHE R8	Maths
Religion	History	Geography	Irish	Religion

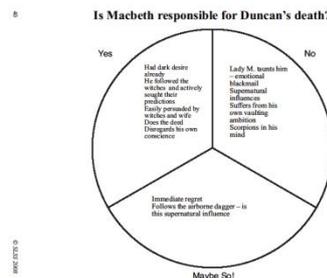
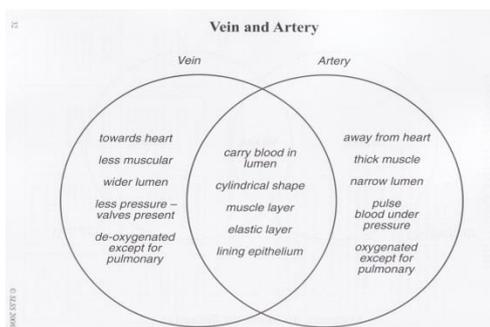
2. **Become organised.** Use your homework journal for homework and to pack your bag for the next day. Write in the names of the subjects in for each day. It will save time when taking down homework in class. For your files/notes/books
  - Have a weekly clear out and organisation of locker and work area.
  - Use colour folders and covers/colour tabs for your copies. Use the same colour for the subjects as in your timetable. For example, English could be red, Maths yellow, Geography pink etc.
  - Have your MOBILE switched OFF when doing homework.
3. **Use SMART Goals for homework so you have an exact idea of what to learn within a given time.** It will help to keep you focussed. This is far more productive than reading over a chapter three times. Here is an example from History on the Reformation. *At the end of 20 minutes I will know the following key facts and be able to test myself:*
  - 5 causes of the reformation
  - 5 facts about Luther's life
  - 5 facts about how his beliefs were different to those of the Catholic Church
  - The names of 2 other reformers
4. **You need to put material to be learnt from short-term memory into long-term.** Rote learning (learning off-by-heart what you do not understand) is not recommended for students with dyslexia. It is better to learn with understanding or to see patterns. Use several senses rather than look over/read over notes to make the material your own. It is hard work but it helps. Use activities such talking, listening, debating, drawing, visualising, flashcards, lists of questions etc.
5. **Know your preferred learning style and use it for learning.**
  - **Visual learners** – prefer diagrams, colour, mindmaps, organisers

- **Verbal/auditory learners** – like using highlighting, recording on MP3, talking and repeating information.
- **Movement**, movement, saying, writing.

The website [www.vark-learn.com](http://www.vark-learn.com) has an on-line questionnaire that takes about ten minutes to complete and tells you your preferred learning style. While you might have a preferred style, sometimes it might take a combination of learning styles to get material into your memory.

## 6. Note taking

- If you cannot take good notes, can you get photocopies or use revision books. This will allow you listen in class and understand what is being taught. There are websites that can be helpful. See end of this article.
- Put page numbers, date, subject and topic at the top of each page
- When summarising the summary should be less than a quarter of text.
- Use lots of space, numbering, bullet points, headings, sub-headings & colour.
- Graphic Organisers and Mindmaps help organise your thinking, help when learning/memorising material and then help in structuring written answers. There are some examples of graphic organisers below. The Assistive Technology Outreach Service at UCC has online videos showing the use of mindmaps at [www.ucc.ie/en/dss/callouts/resources/videos](http://www.ucc.ie/en/dss/callouts/resources/videos).



## 7. Memory techniques can help with learning.

- Visualisation. Make up images in your mind to help you remember. Here is an example. *The colours in the wires in the electric plug are **blue, green/yellow, and brown**. See the image of a Teddybear (brown for the live wire,) on green grass (green for the earth wire) and a blue sky (blue for the neutral).*
- Grouping. Don't try to memorise long lists of unrelated facts. Group them in blocks.
- Mnemonics. Make up sentences or words that help you remember facts. Here are some examples.
  - **FATDAD: 6 counties of Northern Ireland**
  - **Colours of the Rainbow: - Richard of York gave battle in vain**
  - **Stalagmites and Stalactites: Mites go up, tites come down**
  - **Spring Forward, Fall Back: (the change in hours in Autumn & Spring)**

## 8. Reading

- Try to make time to read something everyday. It will develop reading stamina and speed. It is like training for a race. You cannot run a 5 K race immediately. You train for it over time.
- Active reading means asking yourself questions about the text before you start, then try to find the answers to those questions as you read. It will help keep your mind focussed. Then when you finish, check if you can now answer the questions.
- See if a plastic colour overlay helps or use a ruler to keep your eyes focussed on the page. Maybe enlarged print (on computer or Kindle) may help. Digital copies of textbooks are available so you can read and hear the text at the same time. Factsheet 16 under downloads at [www.dyslexiacourses.ie](http://www.dyslexiacourses.ie) has details on how to access them. There is a scanning pen available now which reads aloud text as well as capturing text to file. See [www.scanningpenshop.com](http://www.scanningpenshop.com).
- Reading aloud or subvocalizing (saying the words quietly to yourself) can help you read more accurately particularly in exams.

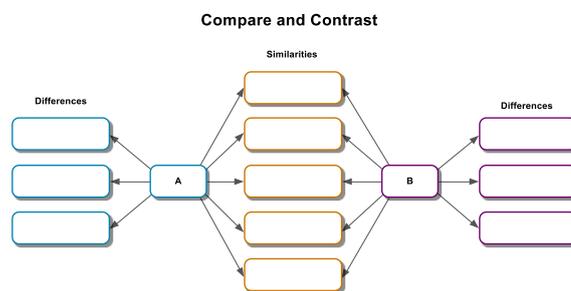
## 9. Spelling and Vocabulary

- Dictionary/notebook when reading will help develop vocabulary: Put a tab where each letter begins in the dictionary. Have an alphabet bookmark and choose a dictionary with large print. Collins Dictionaries have dictionaries where the alphabet is printed on each page.
- Keep a vocabulary notebook for each subject
- Develop mnemonics for spelling words you confuse
  - Dilemma Emma has a **dilemma**
  - Separate There is **a rat** in separate
  - Innocent **In no century** is murder an innocent crime
  - Principal/Principle The principal is your **Pal**, a rule is a principle
- Become a word detective. Lots of longer words come from Latin and Greek. If you understand the meaning of some of these words, you will be able to understand new words you might come across. For example, if *aqua = water*, *phobia = fear*, *hydro = water*, *bi = two*, *lateral = side*, *--cide = killing*, you might be able to guess the meaning of the following:
  - Aquaphobia, hydrophobia,
  - Hydrotherapy
  - Bilateral, multilateral,
  - Herbicide, infanticide, insecticide.

## 10. Writing

- Make up three characters in great detail such as how they look, clothes, hobbies, family, school, jobs, friends, opinions etc. Collect pictures from magazines etc. to illustrate your characters. It makes it easier to compose a short story if you have people already in your head.

- Use your five senses when writing a description of a scene.
- When answering questions think of 3 points to support your answer, then 2 references /quotes to back up each point.
- Use the question to start your answer. So if you are asked *What the key causes of climate change?* begin your answer *The key causes of climate change are..*
- Write and don't stop for spelling, check it afterwards otherwise it will interrupt your thinking.
- Have checklists of points to prompt you to write more. For example when writing about a person in history, think about clothes, food, farming, houses, rulers, religion, schools, beliefs, death.
- Templates which show how to structure an answer help with planning. Examples are available with Inspiration Software. Here is an example.



## Websites that can help

[www.sparknotes.com](http://www.sparknotes.com)

- A number of animated video guides to some Shakespearian plays (Romeo and Juliet, etc.) and some novels (To Kill a Mockingbird, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, 1984 etc.).
- There are also No Fear Guides for some plays such as The Merchant of Venice and some novels. These provide the original text on one half of the page, with modern English language version on the other half of the page.

[www.duolingo.com](http://www.duolingo.com)

This site provides interactive learning of languages with different levels. Languages include Irish, French, Spanish, German and Italian.

[www.alison.com](http://www.alison.com)

Free on-line course in Project Maths with video tutorials of lessons at JC and LC levels in both ordinary and higher levels.

[www.juniorcertscience.com](http://www.juniorcertscience.com)

Notes and resources for Junior Certificate Science

[www.jcspliterary.ie](http://www.jcspliterary.ie)

Under the tab subjects, there are workbooks to provide easy access to the theory of Junior Certificate Materials Technology (Wood) and Metalwork