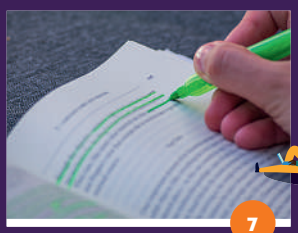
The Dyslexia Guild

LITERACY SPECIALISTS
TEACHERS • ASSESSORS



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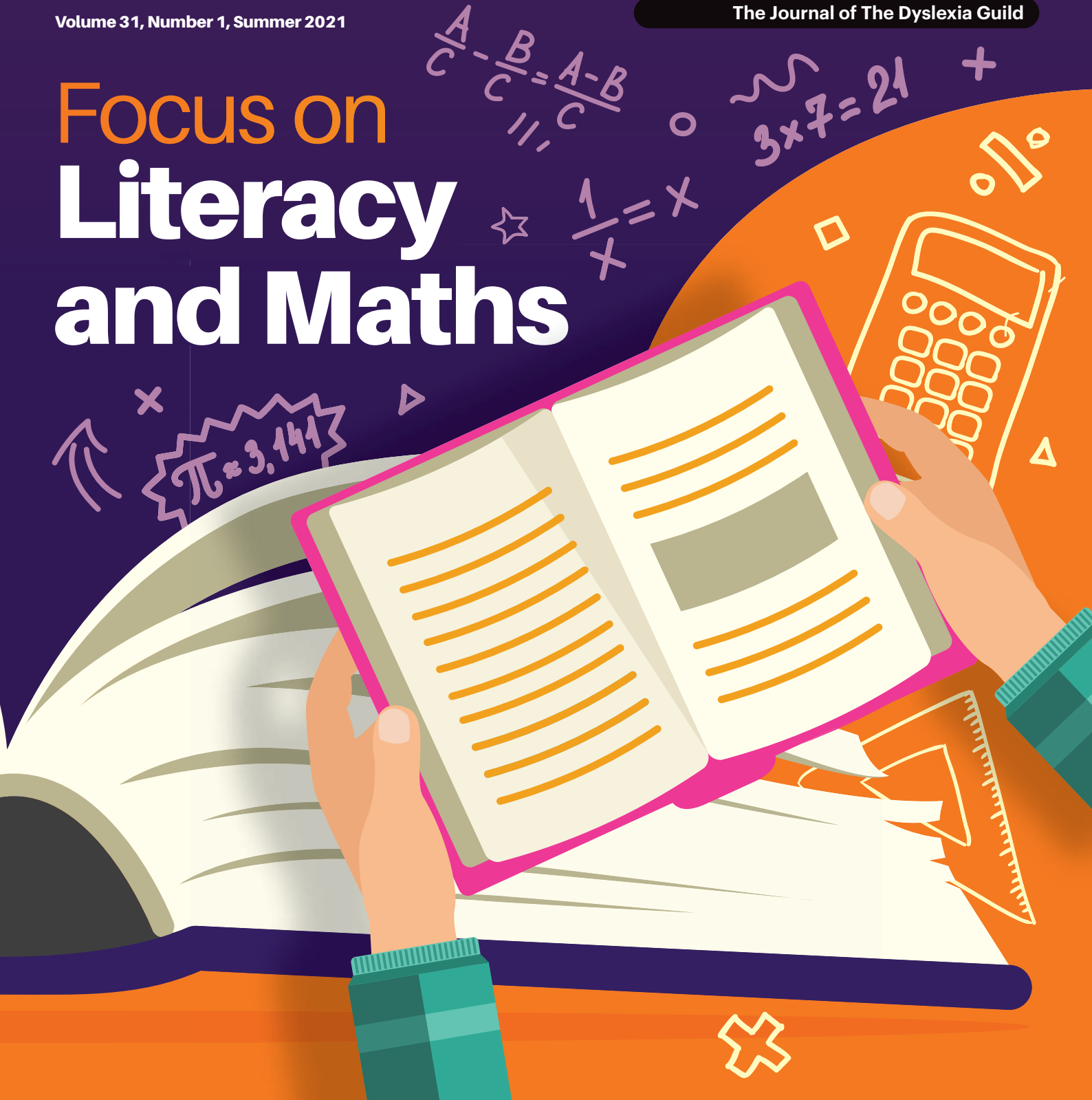
# Dyslexia Review

Volume 31, Number 1, Summer 2021

The Journal of The Dyslexia Guild

## Focus on Literacy and Maths



# Join the Dyslexia Guild

## The professional body for specialist teacher/practitioners, assessors and support staff

The Dyslexia Guild is a membership organisation for specialist teachers, assessors and practitioners and we welcome all interested professionals to join us.

Guild members benefit from letters after their name as either Fellow (FDG), Member (MDG) or Associate (ADG) and a listing in our Professional Member Directory.

The Dyslexia Guild also has a clearly defined membership grade for Study Skills Support Tutors Associate Member Further and Higher Education (ADG FE/HE) and an Affiliate grade for any individual who shares the interests of the Guild and for student members as well as a group membership rate.

- **A Library and National Dyslexia Resource Centre of specialist materials including e-books and access to over 1600 electronic journals**
- **Dyslexia Review: The journal of The Dyslexia Guild, topical articles and academic features**
- **Guild Member online discussion forums: liaise with experts on topics such as Access Arrangements, Assessment and APC and working within the adult, further and higher education environment**
- **The Annual Guild Summer Conference: a vibrant and engaging networking event**

The Dyslexia Guild is also an SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate (APC) awarding body issuing Assessment Practising Certificates on behalf of the SpLD Assessment Standards Committee (SASC).

Membership benefits also include preferential discounts on Dyslexia Action courses, 10% discount in the Dyslexia Action Shop, a regular electronic newsletter and professional indemnity insurance.

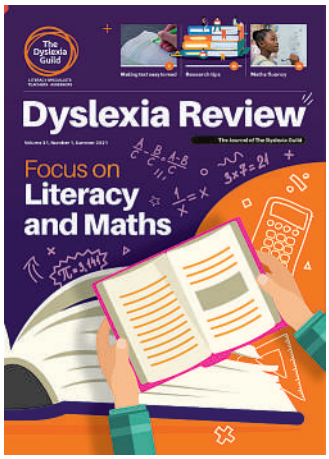
The Dyslexia Guild

LITERACY SPECIALISTS • TEACHERS • ASSESSORS

Email: **guild@dyslexiaaction.org.uk** | Tel: 01784 222342

For further information see: **dyslexiaguild.org.uk**

# Welcome




Cover: Focus on literacy and maths

## Welcome to the Summer Edition of *Dyslexia Review*.

We hope that you will all be able to have a relaxing break over the summer period as well as some dedicated time for reading and reflection.

Membership News in this issue provides a timely reminder on the importance of Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Members have access to a CPD Log template which is available from the CPD section on the Guild Members' website and which provides a structured way of recording CPD activity.

Our opening feature in this edition is from Professor David Wray, a literacy expert from the University of Warwick and a government advisor for the National Literacy Strategy. The writing focus for dyslexia is often on the use of serif and sans serif fonts. In this article the impact of using different fonts in order to make text as easy to read as possible is the primary focus. A feature that will be helpful to all writers and designers as well as literacy specialists.

We are also pleased to have a summary of a research project that has been taking place at Nottingham Trent University into the spelling skills of children with Developmental Language Disorder. Delivered during the pandemic, the team responded flexibly to the challenges raised by the disruption and were able to adapt their work as they went along and still meet the targets set, which is admirable.

Our centre pages focus on the topic of research with useful tips provided by the wider team from Dyslexia Action and Real Training. This handy Research Tips guide can be used for your own benefit or that of the learners you support. We have also provided a short list of reference guides obtainable from the Dyslexia Guild Library – there are many more available. Why not check in to your library account to browse the selection of e-books and journal articles available?

We once again have some sound advice for those providing support for exam access arrangements, this time on Maths Fluency tests. This article also provides interesting information for all specific learning difficulties (SpLD) specialists on some of the challenges encountered for those with maths difficulties. We conclude with a guest article from Literacy 100 co-founder Julia Olisa on Literacy and Homelessness. If you have some time available to volunteer for this charity, they would be keen to hear from you.

Last but not least, we have a news roundup from the Professional Tutoring Partnership project that has been running this past year and a fresh supply of book reviews as always.

Happy reading to you all!

**Kathryn Benzine**
Editor

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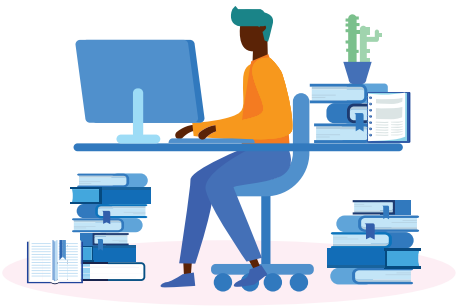

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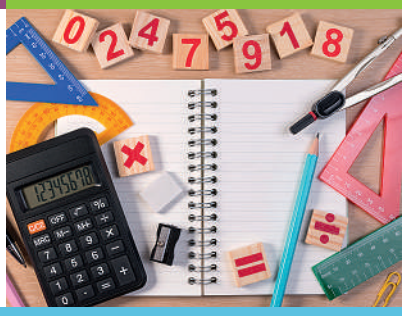

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# Membership News

Member Benefits in profile

**Jan Beechey Dip LIS MCILIP, Guild Administrator and Librarian**

In April this year, World Book Night 2021 announced its theme of "Books To Make You Smile" as a response to the impact of COVID-19, and to highlight the proven power of reading and the benefits it brings to mental health and wellbeing. Our readers will be pleased to know therefore that we have added even more titles to our e-book collection in the Dyslexia Guild library, professionally positive benefits for all!

- Understanding and Supporting Children with Literacy Difficulties: An Evidence-Based Guide for Practitioners
- Disciplinary Literacy and Explicit Vocabulary Teaching: A Whole School Approach to Closing the Attainment Gap
- Reading Difficulties and Dyslexia: Essential Concepts and Programs for Improvement
- Positive Mental Health for School Leaders
- Dyslexia and Inclusion: Classroom Approaches for Assessment, Teaching and Learning
- Practical Research Methods in Education
- Autism: A new Introduction to Psychological Theory and Current Debate
- The Assessment of Special Educational Needs: International Perspective
- Including Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in Learning and Life
- Rosenshine's Principles in Action
- The Neurodiverse Workplace: An Employer's Guide to Managing and Working with Neurodivergent Employees, Clients and Customers
- The SENCo Handbook: Leading and Managing a Whole School Approach
- Dyslexia and Spelling: Making Sense of it All
- Visible Maths: Using Representations and Structure to Enhance Mathematics Teaching in Schools.

We hope that our selection of titles will help you to smile. Do contact library@dyslexiaaction.org.uk if you need library login details.

## Continuing Professional Development - Why bother?

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is often seen as a chore by some and is a requirement to fulfil membership criteria by most professional bodies, but it really is an investment in you and your future.

**Benefits**

- Self-improvement to match standards of peers in your field
- Enhancing knowledge and skills to benefit your clients and community
- Ensuring your knowledge is relevant and up to date with current legislation
- Increase your chance at career progression and engagement in your work
- Engage with experts in the profession
- Increase your self-esteem and adaptability in times of change and transition
- Confidence in your value by clients and employers
- Work towards a qualification
- Improve areas of weakness or gaps in knowledge or reinforce strengths.

CPD is not heading for a single goal, it is striving for, achieving and renewing of learning and development goals. It is a reflective and evaluative process and follows a cycle (model adapted from Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain (RPSGB 2009).

**Reflection** – What do I need to know or be able to do?
**Planning** – How can I learn?
**Action** – Learning or Implementation
**Evaluation** – What have I learned and how does it benefit my practice?

When searching out the right sort of training, do ensure you are getting a high standard of quality and value for money. Some universities and colleges offer Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) which are free for anyone to enrol in, but beware, they are usually just taster courses or may be very basic. Who is offering the training, are they accredited, approved or validated by anyone? What level is it? How many hours of CPD does it cover?

Dyslexia Action offers many CPD courses at Level 4, 5 or 7, all of which are either certified by The CPD Standards Office, approved by the SpLD Assessment Standards Committee (SASC) or validated by Middlesex University. Last year we won the 2020 Teach Secondary Awards for our CPD programmes.

Real Training also offers courses approved by the British Psychological Society, DfE or validated by Middlesex University.

CPD is not only formal activities such as training courses; it can also be self-directed study*. The Guild provides some free CPD to all members in the use of various resources such as *The Dyslexia Guild Adults Toolkit*, materials from which are also relevant to practitioners working with children, as they can be adapted.

The library resources contain many useful books to help you enhance your knowledge as well as thousands of online journals that help you keep up to date with current research. Our Guild Gallery electronic newsletter, Dyslexia Review articles and our annual conference (now holding out for 2022), can all be used for self-directed study. For those of you who are training others in specific learning difficulties (SpLD), presenting a course or presentation within the subject area, that too is relevant.

For those working in the school sector, Real Training offers a free online SEND Reviewer Training course to enable more people to conduct quality reviews of provision and settings. Find out more at realtraining.co.uk/online-send-reviewer training.

A full list of CPD activities appears on *The Dyslexia Guild CPD Requirements* document, available in the Guild website members' area.

*N.B. Some ADG FE/HE grades of membership are conditional and those members will have been set individual requirements to obtain specific goals or qualifications and so some of the CPD mentioned here would be in addition to existing requirements.

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## Getting the most out of your indemnity insurance

Howden Broking provides details of some of the extra services it provides to Dyslexia Guild members.

It is an important requirement for anyone with an Assessment Practising Certificate (APC) to be covered by Professional Indemnity Insurance whilst assessing. Although many practitioners will be covered by their employer's insurance, anyone working privately must take out their own cover. Equally, anyone undertaking private teaching or training is strongly advised to be insured for their professional practice.

Dyslexia Guild put some of the questions you may have to our recommended firm of insurance brokers, Howden, who are experienced in providing policies to education professionals.

**Do you offer legal advice?**

Our policies have a legal helpline attached to them provided by Law Express Ltd and so this is already available to any Guild members who take out a policy with us.

**Does your cover provide for defamation of character?**

Professional indemnity insurance is a defensive policy which means that it is there to defend policyholders against a complaint to a professional association or claim in the civil courts for compensation within the remit of their work; in this case dyslexia assessment and specialist teaching and anything which falls within that. It includes defence where there is an allegation of misconduct, however the policy does have a deliberate acts exclusion which means that if a policyholder harmed a person intentionally this would be excluded. For example if there was an allegation of sexual misconduct the policy would defend the policyholder provided that they alleged they were innocent or to the point that it is proved that they are not innocent.

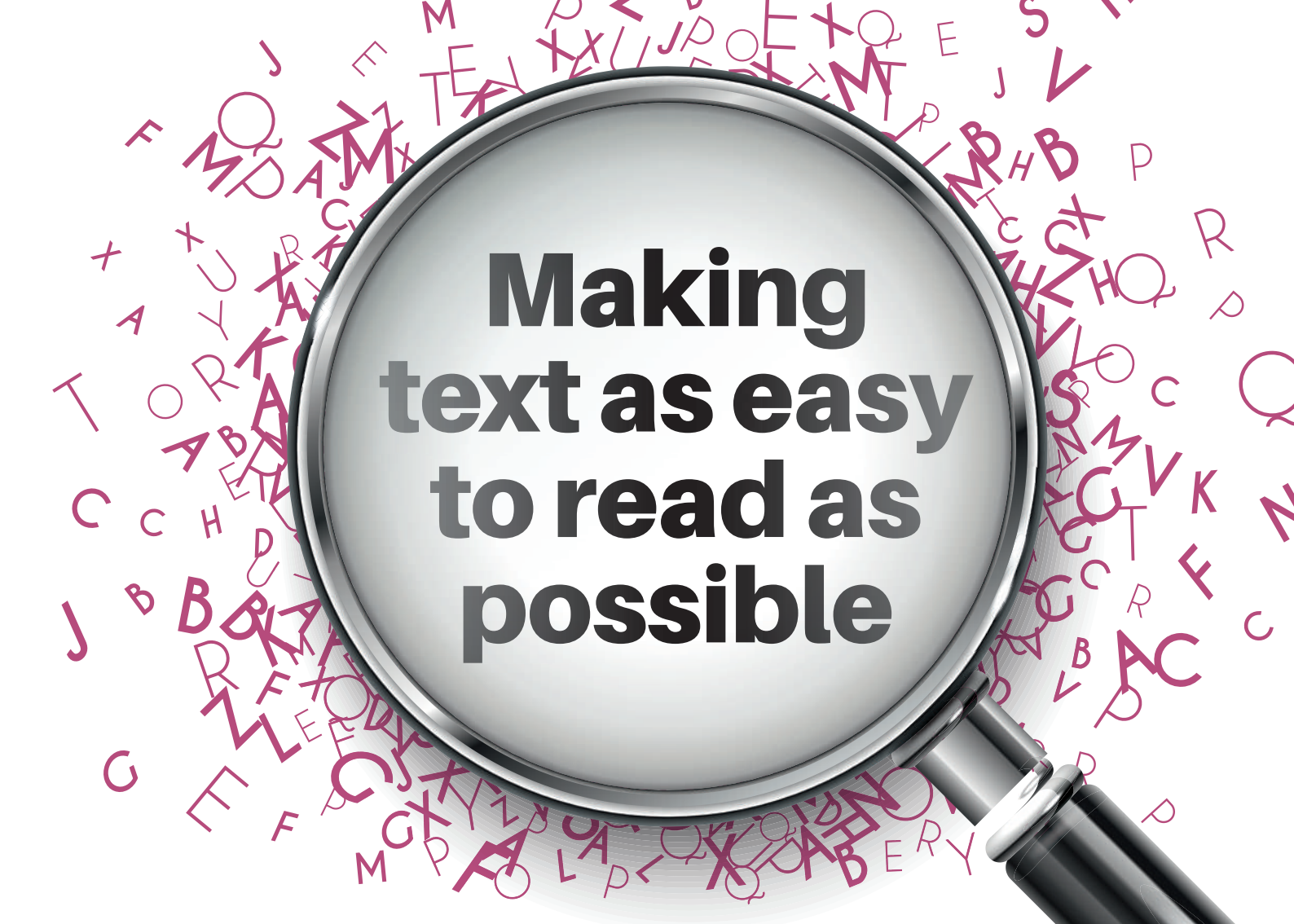
**Is there cover for my expensive test materials or equipment against loss or damage?**

We do have a package policy which will cover equipment both in members' homes or office premises and whilst out of the home/office setting too. See our *Office and Business Insurance Cover.*

**Do you offer Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checking for the self-employed?**

We do not provide DBS checks but you can use an Umbrella Body to do this for you. They usually charge a fee from around £20 for a standard DBS check to around £50 for an Enhanced DBS check. A list of umbrella bodies is available on the Home Office website, which can be filtered by sector. https://dbs-ub-directory.homeoffice.gov.uk/

**For further information** on Howden's Professional Indemnity Insurance see the Member Benefits section on the Dyslexia Guild Members' website.



# Making text as easy to read as possible

**David Wray is Professor of Literacy Education at the University of Warwick and is best known for his work on developing teaching strategies to help pupils access the curriculum through literacy and the National Literacy Strategy.**

When teachers at whatever level produce written material for their students to read, there are many things to think about. There would be little point in producing material that the learners simply could not read. Several chapters in Wray (2020) report research into this aspect of reading, usually known as 'readability'. There is, however, one aspect of classroom text which tends to get neglected in readability studies, yet is almost self-evidently crucial to learners' reading, and that is the phenomenon which is generally termed 'typography'. This has traditionally been an area of study for graphic designers and printers, but there are several typographical features which teachers might also profitably take account of. These can be summed up in several key rules concerning the use of text in the documents you might produce for students (Williams, 2014; Lidwell et al., 2010).

## Think about fonts

There are several issues to consider in choosing the fonts you might use to write material for students. One of these can loosely be described as "font personality". Fonts do seem to have personalities, as can be seen in the brief list below.

pessimistic (Chiller)

*fancy (Vivaldi)*

**conservative (Bookman Old Style)**

childish (Curlz MT)

**important (Britannic Bold)**

professional (Microsoft Sans Serif)

So, what is the rule here? Know your audience, know your document's purpose, and pick a font that matches your audience's expectations and your document's purpose. Get this rule wrong, and you may have ruined the entire document.

Most documents look better If you use more than one font. But few look good if you use more than three. So, what do you need to remember? No matter what the document is, try using two fonts – one font for the headings and another font for the body text. It will make your document so much more attractive to read than just using one font.

### Good Example

See how using two different fonts makes this paragraph look nice? Two non-conflicting fonts can make a document go from bland to professional.

### Bad example

See how using the same font twice doesn't have the same appeal as the paragraph above?

When you use more than one font in a document, you should try to contrast font families. Try to avoid using two fonts that look like each other. So, pick two fonts that come from different font families — serifs (like Times New Roman), sans serifs (like Arial), script (anything that looks like handwriting), or decorative. Make sure the fonts look very different from each other.

You also, of course, need to pay some attention to font size. Because 12-point font was the Microsoft Word default for so long, many of us began to think that 12-point was the best size for reading. But the picture seems to be more complex than this. Research has suggested (e.g., Katzir et al, 2013) that, for young beginning readers, reducing font size seemed to hinder their reading comprehension but, for older students (10 to 11-year-olds), it had the opposite effect. Research by Bernard et al (2003) gave some detailed insights into the effects of popular typefaces and their sizes. The results suggested that:

- At 10-point size, Verdana was the most popular font
- At 12-point size, Arial was the most popular font
- At 14-point size, Comic Sans was the most popular font.

In terms of reading time, it seemed that content written in Times New Roman and Arial was read much faster in comparison to other fonts. It was also observed that Tahoma at font size 10 seemed to be the most legible, followed by Courier at font size 12, and Arial at font size 14. Thus, it does not seem to be the case that a bigger font size necessarily means faster reading and better legibility.

One thing that will certainly make what you write harder to read will be to write it in ALL CAPITALS. This is because we tend to perceive words as shapes as well as groups of letters/sounds. But when words are written in ALL CAPITALS, the shapes go away — the words all turn into rectangles. This actually slows down reading (as well as giving the reader the impression that you are yelling at them).

Small caps, like all caps, have a readability problem when used for large sections of text. However, small caps can be used for abbreviations so that undue attention Is not drawn to them.

Sarah used to work for the BBC but now she works for ITV.

**Think about lines and spacing**

Line length refers to the width of a line of text on a single line. If a line length is too long, text becomes difficult to read. Line lengths can be long if the font size is large, but if you use a small font size (say, 10pt), your line length should not be more than about 3½ inches. Calculate an ideal line length by taking your font size, doubling that number, and creating a line length about that long in picas (there are six picas in one inch). So, if you have a 12-point font, for example, your line length would be about 24 picas, or four inches. Note that the default in Microsoft Word is 11-point Calibri with 1 inch margins on 8½ inch wide paper. This means the line length is 6½ inches, which is too large.

$$\text{Ideal line length in inches} = \frac{\text{Font Point Size} \times 2}{6}$$

Line spacing, also called leading, is the space between lines. Most often, fonts are designed with line spacing slightly larger than their point size (If you have a 10-point font the default is probably 12-polnt leading). Typically, that looks crowded with large bodies of text. Consider increasing line spacing to improve readability (but do not increase it too much!).

In this paragraph, the font size is 10pt with single line spacing. It looks a little crowded. If this were copy in a brochure, people would not like to read it as much.

In this paragraph, the font size is 10pt with 1.5-line spacing. If this were copy in a brochure, people would be more likely to read it.

In this paragraph, the font size is 10pt with double line spacing. This looks a little too spaced out and if this were copy in a brochure, people would be less likely to read it.

Both kerning and letter spacing refer to the process of adjusting the spacing between characters.

```
Here the letter spacing is set
to normal.
Here it is set to expanded.
And here to condensed.
```

The font used above is Lucida Console, which is a monospaced font, that is, each letter is exactly the same width, as on a manual typewriter. Notice the slightly larger gaps between letters such as l and i than between the other, broader letters. It is more usual nowadays to use a proportional font, in which there are thin letters and wider letters. Here are the same three lines in Verdana, a proportional font.

**Here the letter spacing is set to normal.**

**Here it is set to expanded.**

**And here to condensed.**

It should be clear that a proportional font, set with normal line spacing, is marginally easier to read. The odd letter spacing around l and i has disappeared.

Kerning refers to the ways in which one letter takes account of an adjacent letter, to improve legibility. The effects can readily be seen in the following words:

Tea

Tea

You should see that in the first word the initial T does not overlap at all with the following e, which creates a space between them which appears different from the space between the e and the a.

In the second word, through kerning, the T is now closer to the e and in fact its cross bar overlaps slightly. This allows the spaces between all the letters to appear even. This evenness generally promotes greater ease of reading.

Care needs to be taken, though, with the degree of kerning which is used. Look at the following example:

WAR

WAR

WAR

Here we have three versions of "WAR" in the same font but with different degrees of kerning. The top version has no kerning at all, which creates a rather odd gap between the W and the A. The middle version has some kerning and is perhaps the easiest of the three to read. The bottom version has probably been over-kerned for this character combination: the tightly spaced "WA" does not balance with the "AR" pair so the gap between A and R looks odd.

**Think about reader friendliness and legibility**

Reader friendliness refers to how well large quantities of text (entire paragraphs) read. It is affected by font size, font type, leading (space between lines), kerning (space between letters), and line length. For greater reader friendliness:

- Use serif and sans serif fonts – usually a sans serif font for headings and a serif font for the body text.
- Do not use script or decorative fonts – unless you have very special reasons (e.g. if you were designing a Christmas card).
- Increase leading / line spacing a bit – but not too much.
- Adjust kerning, if necessary.
- Use an ideal line length.

Legibility refers to how well short bursts of text (like a logo or name) read. For words whose understanding is very important, legibility is critical. On your CV, for example, you will want to use a typeface in which your name is legible. Note that legibility is affected by the actual letters in a word. Sometimes one word will read perfectly fine in a particular font, but another word will be difficult to read in the same font. If a name or word is uncommon or spelled uniquely, do not choose a typeface that is difficult to read.

The following font looks elaborate but is legible because the word is fairly familiar.

*Annie*

The following word, however, although in the same font, is not as legible because the word itself is unfamiliar.

*Jessyka*

A change of font will make this word perfectly legible.

*Jessyka*

See how ugly and utterly tacky the hyphenated words in this otherwise wonderfully constructed paragraph look? Avoid the pitfall of making your reader unnecessarily hang in suspense. Plus, getting rid of the hyphens will remove some of the visual noise.

Line breaks and hyphens can also cause problems. Line breaks refer to when a word at the end of a line is broken into two and hyphenated to lead the reader to the next line. The reality is that line breaks are bad for readability and are often just plain ugly. Adjust your word processing program to get rid of them if you can (see above).

### Think about highlighting

Highlighting text is an important part of readability and scannability. The general rule, though, is never to highlight more than 10% of a page. If everything is highlighted, nothing becomes highlighted. Also, only use two or three highlighting techniques at once. Do not, in other words, use colour, italics, boldface, font change, size, and underlining all at the same time.

Highlight with *italics*.

Highlight with **bold**.

Highlight with **font change**

Highlight with underlining.

Do not use **too** *many* techniques **at once**.

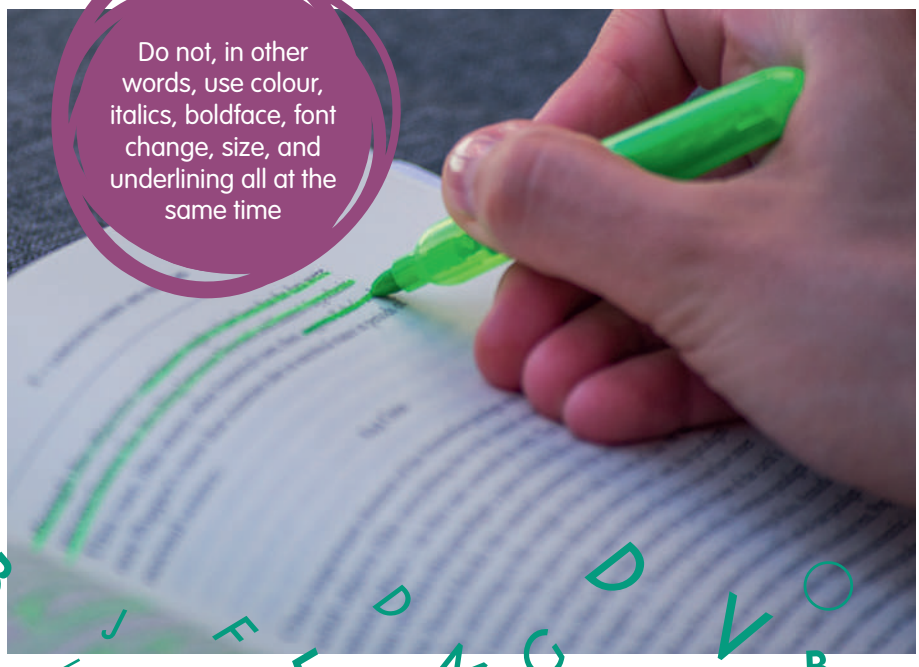
### Consider using old style figures

Old style figures refer to numbers that are written with elements that go above and below the baseline (the imaginary line upon which text sits). Just like letters.

123456789 (A font such as High Tower Text does this automatically).

Often, if you use old style figures, numbers will blend in better with the text.

Look at the two examples below. The second uses normal numbering, which has the effect of making the numbers stand out from the text, simply because they are higher.




The first example uses old style figures, all the same height as the surrounding letters and using normal letter size descenders. Because these figures have similar dimensions to the letters, they stand out less. This blending makes the text slightly easier to read.

Since the beginning of the Cambrian period 540 million years ago, oxygen levels have fluctuated between 15% and 30% by volume. Towards the end of the Carboniferous period (about 300 million years ago) atmospheric oxygen levels reached a maximum of 35% by volume.

---

Since the beginning of the Cambrian period 540 million years ago, oxygen levels have fluctuated between 15% and 30% by volume. Towards the end of the Carboniferous period (about 300 million years ago) atmospheric oxygen levels reached a maximum of 35% by volume.

### Conclusion

As we have seen, there are a number of typographical features which will affect whether your students will find the text you write for them easy or difficult to read. In most cases, it will be the content of a text that you wish them to focus on. So, it is important that visual aspects of text do not get in the way of this.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# Developing a digital orthographic knowledge skills intervention through action research during the COVID-19 pandemic

**Researchers Gareth J. Williams, Suzannah Hemsley, Rebecca F. Larkin and Clare Wood from the Department of Psychology at Nottingham Trent University, describe their recent research journey.**

Our research team at Nottingham Trent University has been engaged in a research project, supported by the Leverhulme Foundation, to better understand the spelling skills of children with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD). This disorder is characterised by a difficulty in one or more areas of language, which can be either receptive or productive or both (Bishop, 2017). This project follows from our earlier studies exploring spelling (Larkin et al., 2013) and writing (Williams et al., 2013) in children with DLD. Our recent focus has been on the orthographic knowledge (knowledge of frequently occurring letter patterns) these children have available to employ in spelling attempts.

**The research study**

Phase One of a two-phase project was a series of experimental studies, which found that children with DLD have general orthographic knowledge abilities similar to chronological age-matched peers. Moreover, that providing orthographic information to children with DLD can help with their spelling attempts, and also helps typical peers as well. To reach these findings we had worked with speech and language therapists, many of whom made up our research steering group, as well as many teachers, and over a hundred children.

Phase Two was a classroom-based intervention pilot based on the findings of Phase One. This pilot would help inform a future large-scale intervention evaluation. As with Phase One this pilot would rely on the kind support from teachers, speech and language therapists, and children in classrooms throughout the Midlands. As the pilot intervention was about to start, the COVID-19 pandemic forced the UK into lockdown and threatened to end the project entirely.

The growth in the technology-enhanced classroom and home meant we could develop a pilot online.

As we gathered our thoughts over video-conference, working with our funder and the steering group, our next steps were informed by three themes: technology, action research, and our community.

**Technology and spelling intervention**

The growth in the technology-enhanced classroom and home meant we could develop a pilot online. The transformation to the digital classroom is well documented (Deloitte, 2016) and, although digital poverty continues to be prevalent in the UK (Office for National Statistics, 2019), the presence of digital devices as part of childhood has grown over time (Ofcom, 2019). With this in mind, and in conversation with our stakeholder community, we developed our pilot using the digital platform: Labvanced (Finger et al., 2017). Part of a growing toolkit for researchers preparing to deliver studies online, it allowed for flexibility in building activities that could be experienced on a smartphone, tablet, or computer. Core to our pilot intervention was a method we also used for our experimental studies, a clue word activity (e.g., Goswami, 1988). We adapted this to, first, provide a clue to help spell a target word, then provide feedback on the attempt. The platform allowed us to provide prototypes to our community quickly and to adjust these responsively to feedback, within an action research approach.

**The action research approach**

The second theme was the adoption of an action research approach to Phase Two. Our initial plan was to conduct a pilot pre- and post-test classroom intervention that would help guide a future full-scale evaluation. The scale of classroom involvement this would need was now not possible, but we knew that this was not the only way to develop insights to prepare for a larger-scale intervention. Action research is an approach of learning from participants as research progresses; insights from one group inform future cycles of the research programme (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, & Maguire, 2003). In our first cycle we developed a fully-fledged series of clue-word sequences with a wrap-around story about a robot who had broken down and needed help to put their words back together again. This provided us with material to then focus on key areas for subsequent cycles. Three themes emerged from this: first, while the story was interesting, we learnt that it wasn't necessary; children were keener to pick up and have a go at the activities without a storied context. The second, that children were often ready to gain feedback quickly. We shortened the time within sequences so that the pace felt faster but children remained in control of the events. The third was that confidence building helped children feel they were making progress. This led us to adjust the word list to more regular and higher frequency words to help consolidate learning taking place at home or in the classroom.

## Reflections and future directions

These three interacting themes provided insights that we are still exploring. Assessing the effectiveness of the activities is outside the scope of the action research study; this would need a series of carefully controlled studies to better inform a more comprehensive intervention. However, the clue word format was well received, professionals felt that the digital material supported children in an entertaining way that complemented strategies that are typically employed. Children engaged well with the materials, making purposeful attempts at the clue word sequences, and were observed to take on board the feedback provided. Many children were confident in using the activities independently, as we chose designs that were not heavily reliant on text to guide interaction.

We had started our journey modelling the Phase Two pilot on large-scale, traditional, intervention programmes. Through our action research experience, we have started to explore how a future intervention could involve short, app-based digital activities that provide a toolkit for professionals and can flex to meet children's individual needs. As our team has begun to look beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, our experiences have taught us new approaches to engage with our community and new insights that we hope will contribute further to the field, allowing us to develop new ways to support children with DLD in the future.


**Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank the Leverhulme Trust for funding this research project, and for their flexibility and support during the COVID-19 pandemic.


## Community working

The third theme was the strength of our community. Before our project had started, we reached out and met with professionals in speech and language centres across the Midlands of the UK, including hosting a practitioner conference in 2018. We formed a steering group to advise and support our bid to the Leverhulme Foundation. Our move online, however, freed the team from geographical constraints and so we contacted schools across the UK with an invitation to be involved. As our research team shared iterations of the clue-word activities, we used a range of feedback methods including phone calls, online survey, and email. The action research approach and the digital foundation allowed professionals to feed back when they were able to do so, instead of to a strict timetable, and our research teams adapted the work as we went along.

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# Research tips

## Using libraries for your literature search and review

Jan Beechey MCLIP,
Dyslexia Guild Librarian

Before you even decide on your research project topic, you will need to carry out a literature search and review. A literature search identifies the relevant literature, a literature review will review the literature selected. So, why is it necessary? Some key reasons are to find:

- what is already known in the field you wish to study
- the gaps in your knowledge or understanding and
- the gaps in the subject knowledge itself
- the historical context in which your research is placed
- patterns in the research in the same or similar areas
- discrepancies or variables in conflicting findings
- the terminology and definitions – these may have changed over time
- the best methodologies for your research e.g., surveys, tests, or interviews
- 'experts' in the field – who might help you or deepen your understanding.

### What is the literature?

There are several types of literature, but most will be based in academic publishing such as peer reviewed journals. Refereed journals send out articles to reviewers, often experts that work in the same field of research, or form the editorial board of the journal, for comment and approval before they are published.

Academic literature will be your main source but there will also be some items that are known as *grey literature* such as government documents, working papers and conference papers. You may want to use non-academic sources such as newspapers but you must consider them very carefully; is the information based on relevant, up to date research or is it anecdotal? Be sure to evaluate these for bias or vested interests; take a critical stance.

Who are the 'experts' and who commissioned the research? Has any of it been taken out of context, giving a false impression? With all material you need to evaluate and review any claims. What methodology did the research use and how large was the study? Did the study use a wide or narrow range of test subjects? Was it diverse enough to reflect what is happening in wider contexts or society?

### Starting in the library

Your university or college library is a good place to start, and that is because the collections will have been developed by a subject librarian who will have selected relevant resources and weeded the out of date or less useful materials. Do talk to them about your project and ask for help in refining your search terms to find the most relevant results. Librarians can often suggest sources or databases that you may not be aware of, or they will know faculty staff or other researchers who are knowledgeable in similar areas that you can network with. Libraries can often borrow books and articles from other libraries through an inter-library loan scheme.

The British Library supports research across all subject areas and even provides a range of programmes such as PhD Webinars and training events for doctoral students. The British Educational Research Association (BERA) is a membership association committed to sustaining a high-quality educational research community. They have many Special Interest Groups, as well as an Early Career Researcher Network that offers support to those who are in the process of completing their masters or doctorate in education, and helps them to engage with their peers.

**Useful resources for all aspects of research:**

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# Choosing your research topic

Katie Hickin, MEd SEND Programme Leader, Real Training

Choosing your research topic can actually be one of the most difficult parts of the research process as it will set the context for everything that follows. So, where do you start with this important decision? The first step is always to understand the requirements of the assignment so you choose an appropriate topic. Are there certain areas you can or cannot research to meet these requirements?

Consider the scope of your topic by undertaking some background research. If you are searching for literature and the key terms in your topic are not yielding results it may be that your focus is too narrow. Equally if you are bringing up thousands of results it may be that your topic is too broad. Using AND or OR is often a helpful way to initially narrow down a topic e.g., social emotional mental health (SEMH) AND social media.

Finally, the research process can be a long process, so to keep motivated and engaged, make sure you choose a topic that is interesting to you on a personal level. This could be an area that has impacted you personally or a current issue in your field of study. Find the balance between a topic that excites you but will also be of interest to the wider research community. It could be that your chosen research topic tests an existing theory, applies a theory to improve practice or extends previous research.

**'The first step is always to understand the requirements of the assignment so you choose an appropriate topic'**

# Ethics

Dr Richard Lewis, Educational Psychologist, Real Group Academic and Professional Lead

Ethics boards and applications to others for ethical consideration of any research are made in an attempt to safeguard participants, researchers and organisations to ensure that the researcher's quest for the advancement of knowledge does not override the rights of others. There is a need to ensure that the physical and psychological well-being of research participants is not adversely affected by the research. In doing this there are key elements that need consideration:

1. Compelling evidence that the research is needed (there is a gap in the literature or a need for that specific population or that the findings will contribute further to existing research)
2. The design is robust and will produce valid and reliable or credible and trustworthy findings
3. The benefits must outweigh the risks – the ends do justify the means.

Data collection and type is often where considerable factors must be considered; for example, when considering interviews there needs to be informed consent so participants understand the purpose and procedures, withdrawal does not disadvantage them, and anonymity and confidentiality as well as any risks and power balances are considered. When data is in the form of completely anonymised data then how it is accessed, rights of access, purpose and data protection and GDPR factors need consideration.

The British Psychological Society Code of Human Research Ethics (2021) provides pointers for researchers to consider:

- Respect for the Autonomy, Privacy and Dignity of Individuals and Communities
- Scientific Integrity
- Social Responsibility
- Maximising Benefit and Minimising Harm.

Remember that the goal in seeking ethical approval is not to reassure any ethics board or others that your research is not risky but rather to anticipate all possible risks and to seek to mitigate them.

# Data collection

Dr Catherine Marshall MDG, Psychology Lecturer Dyslexia Action and Nottingham Trent University

Collecting data is a really exciting part of your research project. You are ready to take your carefully designed study out into the world and let it loose with real participants. I've always really enjoyed the data collection stage of the research I've been involved in, whether that's been observational studies, language and cognitive experimental tasks, eye-tracking or online surveys. Here are some tips:

- Be realistic about how much time your data collection is likely to take. Add on extra time just in case (especially if you are collecting data in a school).
- Organisation is crucial. Do you have enough scoresheets? Have you got your laptop charger?
- If you are working with children, stickers as rewards work really well (make sure that you have enough).
- If you are doing an online survey, make sure that you have checked and double checked it really carefully before you publish it. Ask a friend to try it to make sure it runs smoothly and is straightforward to navigate.
- Qualitative observations during data collection can be very important – they can provide insights which can help you interpret your data. For example, while I was administering a non-verbal auditory task with children as part of my PhD, I noticed that some of them were giving the tones names and muttering them under their breath as they did the task. This made me wonder whether their use of a verbal strategy was influencing their performance, and gave me the idea for my next study!

# Analysing data

Dr Anna Smith MDG, Lead Psychologist Dyslexia Action

Many students are very nervous when it comes to analysing data, and understandably so; when we first sign up to study psychology, we don't always read the small print that tells us that maths will be involved. I feel lucky that as an undergraduate I had a fantastic Statistics lecturer. He would often bypass all the symbols and the equations involved and focus instead on the reasoning behind the tests we were learning.

One of the first things he pointed out was that there are largely only two kinds of analysis: the evaluation of either differences or relationships. This sounds simple enough, but when you first pick up a statistics book that isn't always obvious. He also showed us that analysis can simplify rather than complicate information, and allow us to see patterns and trends in data which wouldn't otherwise be visible. Quite often, students present pages and pages of raw data in their results section but an effective analysis is able to bundle large quantities of raw data into just one value and an accompanying image.

That value is known as an effect size and over the years I have come to realise how useful this number can be. It can often tell an audience everything they need to know, as it describes the strength of the difference or the relationship being analysed. My tip would be to get to know and understand effect sizes as they are really the essence of an analysis.

# The viva

Dr Siobhan Mellor,
Educational Psychologist and
Director Real Group Ltd.

Having undertaken my viva for the Doctorate in Educational Psychology at UCL in January of this year, my experience is real, raw and recent – but limited. My preparation was supported by great advice from the extensive team within Real Group holding PhDs and Doctorates as well as our colleagues at Middlesex University, UCL and my Doctorate peer group.

### The purpose of the viva

The oral examination (viva voce) enables examiners to judge whether:

1 a distinct contribution has been made to the knowledge base, shown by the discovery of new facts, the development of new ideas and the exercise of independent critical analysis.

2 the candidate successfully explains and defends the work done, methodological choices made and conclusions reached.

### Reviewing the research journey

The written thesis represents years of reading, thinking and writing. To confidently sum up and do justice to all the time and work that has gone into the thesis in just one hour at the viva feels daunting. The viva is not intended to talk about all you have read and thought about – but rather reviewing the main books and papers underpinning the thesis, which is helpful in developing confidence.

### Articulating the distinct contribution

The viva gives the opportunity to defend your work and to explain some of the methodological choices made and conclusions reached. It is important to re-read your thesis from cover to cover to anticipate possible areas of questioning – this process took several weekends to prepare for. Being able to succinctly and coherently articulate the distinct contribution made (without waffle) needs perfecting. Communicating as clearly and concisely as possible what was done and why requires planning. Remembering the rationale for decisions made several years before can be vexing – why did I analyse the data that way? Why was that journal article so pivotal to my methodology? Keeping a journal was advised all the way through and in this viva preparation, the value of those notes became clear.

### The joy of sticky notes

I was advised to 'know my way round my thesis really well' so I could confidently and quickly point to information to support my answers. Remembering that a principal purpose of the viva is to ascertain that the thesis is your own work, highlights the importance of being able to confidently demonstrate that you have a thorough understanding of key aspects of it. One benefit of having an 'online viva' was being based in a comfortable and familiar environment that I could set up ahead of the meeting, and being able to cover the screens in 'aide-memoire' sticky notes.

### Expect constructive challenge

The guidance to examiners states that the candidate should be given the opportunity to explain any deficiencies or clarify any issues raised. After some initial positive comments, most of the questions were about aspects that were not clear to the examiners, or about which they had some concerns. After 10 minutes of quizzing about my pilot interview data, I assumed that the whole thesis was doomed. However, the examiners recommended that a written paragraph was replaced with a clearer explanation that I had just delivered verbally in the viva.

I had been advised to expect constructive challenge. Manage challenge by agreeing with what you think is appropriate since ultimately this is what 'defending' your thesis means. If a challenge is fully justified then say so, explain why you did what you did, acknowledge its weaknesses and outline what you would do differently in the future.

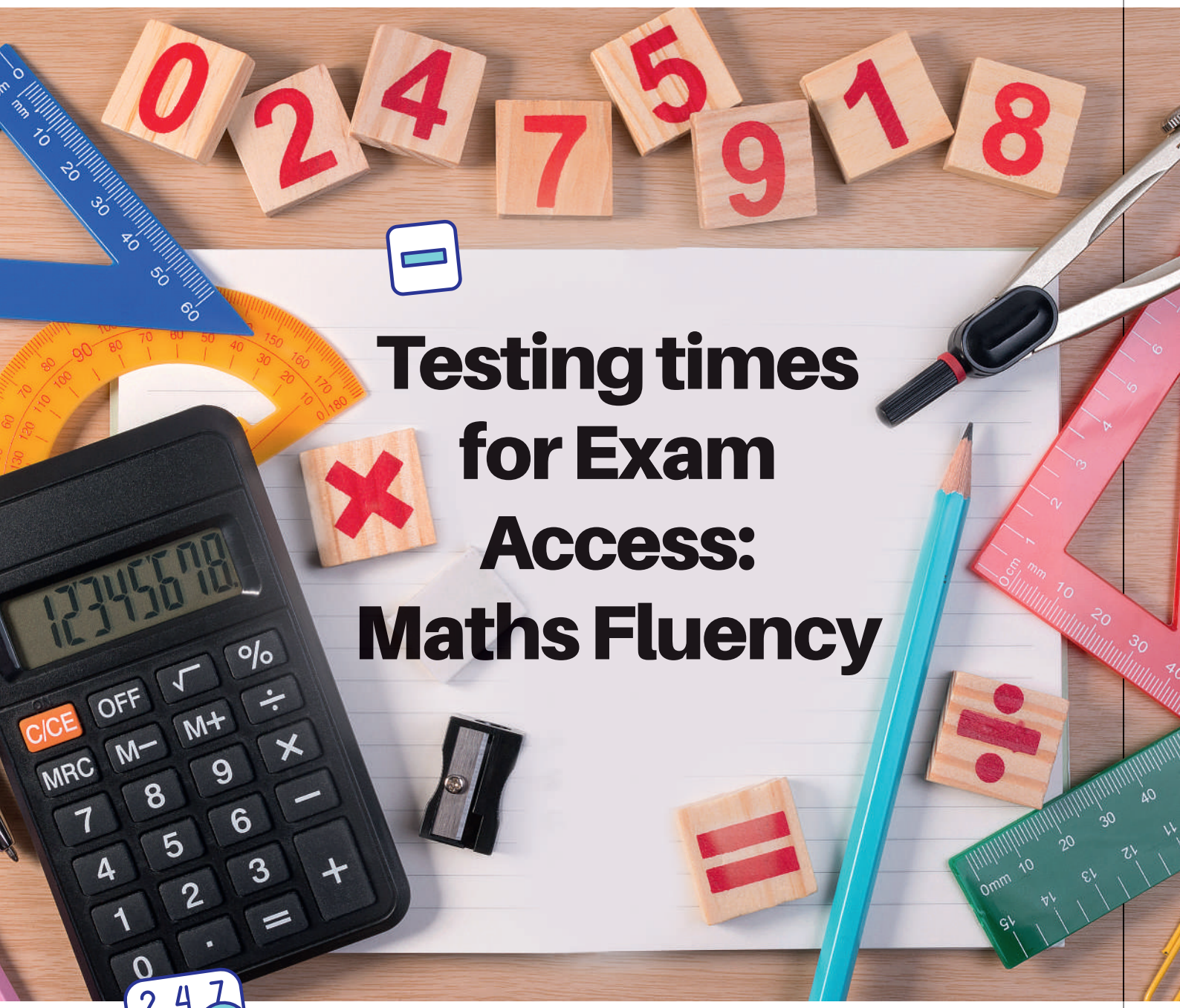
- Avoid defensiveness as such and defensive answers.
- Stay calm.
- Give concise, authoritative three or four-point answers. Let the examiners draw out any other points.

### Relish the rare opportunity

One sage piece of advice from a DEdPsy course member was to enjoy the viva as it would be a rare hour of my life to talk to two people who had actually read my thesis and wanted to talk about it! He said wisely, the opportunity would probably never come along again. On reflection, I did enjoy the hour… but I'd never want to do it again!

### Celebrations amid more work

The most curious aspect of the viva is how it is perceived as 'the end', with congratulations from all those who have known of the journey. Despite the celebrations, however, many more hours lay ahead on 'minor amends'. All done now though – the bubbles after the viva definitely helped.



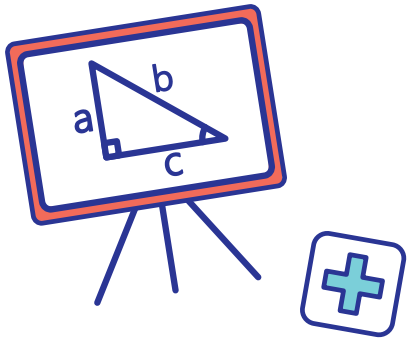
# Testing times for Exam Access: Maths Fluency

**Sophia Butler FDG, EAA e-learning tutor, explains the new test bracket for access arrangements.**

In September 2020 a test of Maths Fluency (or Mathematical Processing, as it is sometimes known) was added to the list of tests that can be used for applications for access arrangements in examinations. A below average score (84 or lower) in Maths Fluency is primary evidence of need, but cannot be used alone and must be supported by supplementary evidence. This change has caused considerable online debate. Questions have been raised as to why the change was made and which tests to use for this assessment. The change was made so that students with maths difficulties for whom calculation is effortful and slow could have barriers removed. A diagnosis of dyscalculia is not required in order for exam accommodations to be given, but at the same time there should be confidence that the student has a disability as defined by the 2010 Equality Act.

**Why 25% extra time for maths?**

Students with maths difficulties frequently have poor executive function, working memory, number sense, and recall of maths facts, times-tables and number bonds. Just as below average reading fluency is recognised as evidence of need for 25% extra time in exams which require reading, below average maths fluency is now seen as primary evidence of need for 25% extra time in maths exams.




Extra time is needed because candidates with below average maths fluency are slower than their non-disabled peers. The extra time can be used then for extra thinking time or to write out times-tables, but care should be taken to ensure that these students do not receive unfair advantage. Ideally, supporting evidence of need for extra time should be provided for both calculator and non-calculator maths papers. This is because on a non-calculator paper the calculator itself may be the reasonable adjustment. By comparing the use of a calculator in calculator papers and other STEM papers with performance on a non-calculator paper we are building evidence of the need for reasonable adjustment. It could be argued that a calculator would be the appropriate reasonable adjustment if that did not conflict with the purpose of a non-calculator paper.

Similar to reading fluency tests, maths fluency tests measure accuracy and speed, measuring the number of simple sums that can be done in a short period of time. They usually involve single digit addition and subtraction, and for older students multiplication and division, and are seen as a reliable measure of fluency.

A below average score in maths fluency is only acceptable as assessment evidence for extra time in maths examinations and cannot be used for accommodation in other subjects, even those closely related such as physics.

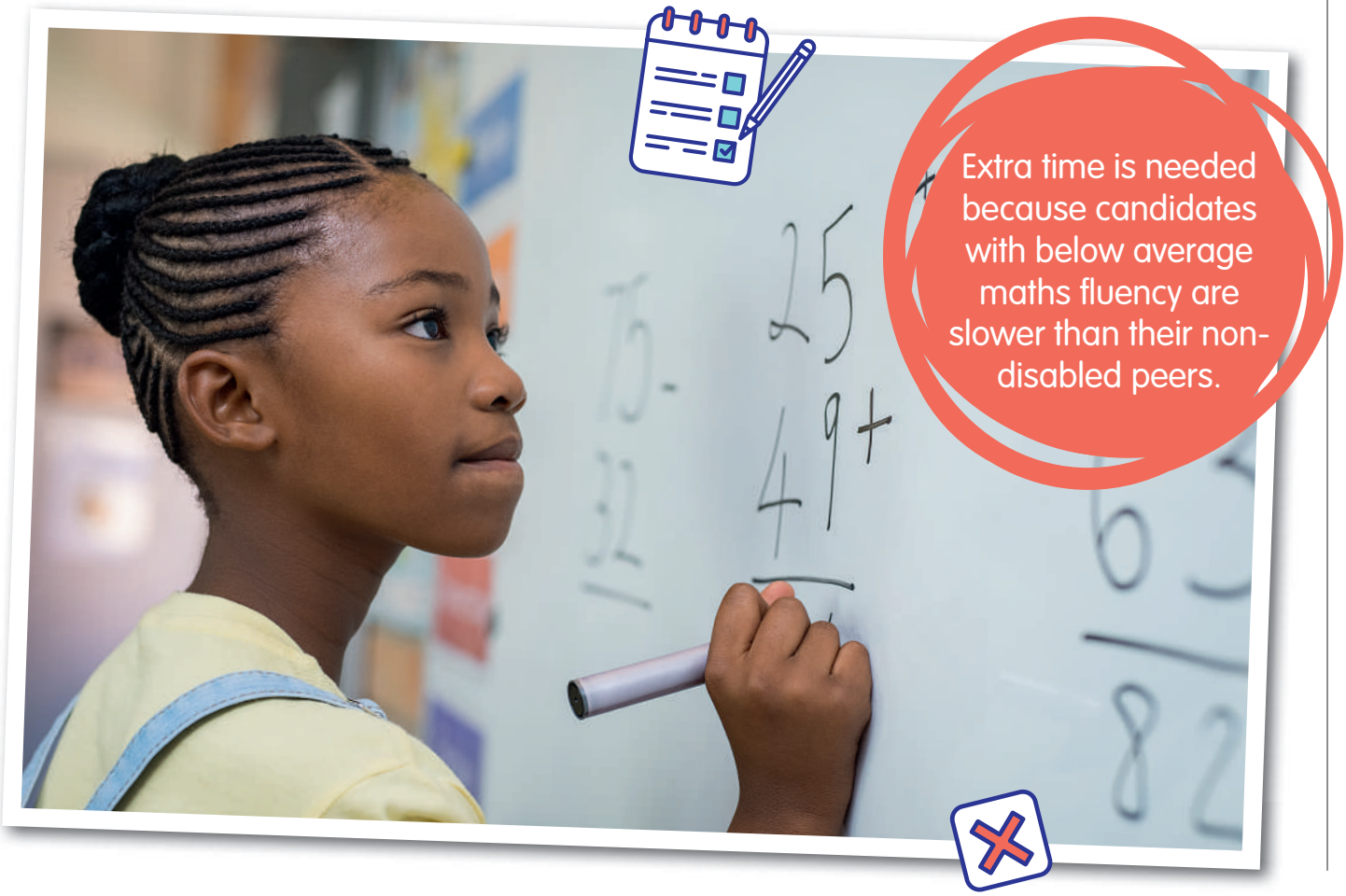
**Should I buy a specific test for maths fluency?**

Only rarely will assessments reveal below average scores in maths fluency alone, which means that a specific test for maths fluency is unlikely to be needed. Because difficulties with maths fluency can be explained by slow processing and/or below average memory, it is probable that a student with maths processing difficulties will have low scores on tests that measure these other functions, such as subtests within CTOPP2, RAN/RAS, TOMAL2 and WRAML2.

Students with maths difficulties often experience maths anxiety, although not always. This type of anxiety is not generalised but closely linked with maths and impacts on maths processing speed, often creating a cycle of anxiety, under-performance, and consequential greater anxiety.

**Extra time in maths: which maths fluency test?**

On rare occasions where no difficulties are seen in speed of processing, or short term and working memory tests, and a maths fluency test is needed, maths attainment tests are not suitable. Quite often, subtest complexity occurs too early in the test and items often test maths related knowledge and skills rather than fluency. For this reason, they are not suitable as evidence of need as they measure what a maths exam is testing rather than a student's speed at which they can process that knowledge.

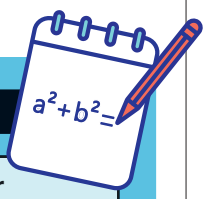


Tests such as the WRAT5 Maths measuring maths knowledge, then, cannot be used for exam access and similarly, the GL Dyscalculia Screener and other tests of number sense cannot be used. Steve Chinn's *More Trouble with Maths* has standard scores but these cannot be used, as the test has not been standardised to a level of reliability and validity appropriate for psychometric assessment.

Four tests of maths fluency are available to specialist teacher assessors, and none of these tests generate a composite using the subtests alone, therefore the composite scores should not be used on the application form. The table below gives details of these tests.

The FAM is a test for dyscalculia and is available as a tablet version for socially distanced face-to-face administration. If the FAM was purchased before 16 November 2020, the e-stimulus book is available for no extra charge by emailing the publishers. A range of tests are available, some of which are appropriate for exam access. As well as tests of rapid naming, a useful task is the Numeric Capacity Test, measuring the ability to hold and manipulate numbers, a function likely to be affected by maths anxiety and which can be used to support an application for extra time. The Maths Knowledge task is almost identical to the written Maths Fluency tasks of the KTEA3, WIAT III and WJ IV, and the oral version requires the answers to be read out rather than written down, which can help to discriminate between number writing difficulty and lack of pure maths fluency.

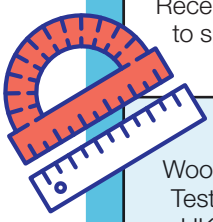
KTEA3, WIAT III UK and WJ IV have much to recommend them as they include other educational tests, some of which can be used for exam access within other domains, but note that the Maths subtests cannot be purchased in isolation.




**Maths Fluency Tests suitable for evidence of need for extra time**

| Name of battery | Description | Age range, cost, year and country of origin | SEM for each subtest |
|---|---|---|---|
| Feifer Assessment of Mathematics (FAM) | Separate timed subtests for addition, subtraction (and multiplication & division).<br>Written ("Knowledge" has 40 items and 60 seconds Oral ("Fluency") has 60 items and 30 seconds. | Age Range: 4-21.11<br>Cost: £648.00<br>Year: 2016<br>USA | **Knowledge**<br>Addition: 4.9<br>Subtraction: 4.6<br>Multiplication: 4.3<br>Division: 4.4<br>**Fluency**<br>Addition: 4.1<br>Subtraction: 4.6<br>Multiplication: 4.0<br>Division: 4.2 |
| Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement, Third Edition (KTEA-3)* | Maths Fluency subtest – The examinee responds to as many addition, subtraction, multiplication and division problems as possible in 60 seconds. | Age Range: 4-25.11<br>Year: 2014<br>Cost: £571.79<br>USA | Maths fluency subtest: 4.74 |
| Wechsler Individual Attainment Test Third UK Edition (WIAT III UK), Recently made available to specialist teachers | Maths Fluency subtests in Addition, Subtraction and Multiplication<br>No division<br>60 seconds to write out as many answers as possible with 48 calculations. | Age Range: 4-25.11<br>Year: 2017<br>Cost: £701.85<br>UK | Addition: 5.97<br>Subtraction: 5.05<br>Multiplication: 4.81 |
| Woodcock-Johnson IV Tests of Achievement UK & IRE Ed (WJ IV Achievement*) | Maths Facts Fluency Index measures ability to solve simple single digit arithmetic problems quickly and accurately within a 3-minute time limit. | Age Range:4-90+<br>Cost: £575.00<br>Year: 2014<br>UK/Ireland | Maths facts fluency composite: 3.35 |

*WJIV maths fluency; according to the manual, the online scoring programme converts the student's raw score to a W score which is a special transformation of the Rasch ability scale. Rasch scaling of test data allows a 'unique calculation of Standard Error of Measurement for each possible test score' in contrast to other tests that 'may provide the average SEM for a group of individuals'.



All three have tests of spelling and a below average score could be used to support a scribe, but only where spellings are 'incomprehensible'. We are not given a percentage but 6%, (equal to about one per line) would most likely render text opaque. The tests also have writing speed tasks which are another route to a scribe.

KTEA3 has tests of phonological processing, writing fluency, reading fluency, object and letter naming that can be used to support extra time.

The code for WIAT III has now changed to CL2R and is therefore available to assessors with qualified teaching status and a further PG qualification in SEN, SpLD or a relevant field at Level 7.

WJ IV has tests of sentence reading fluency and writing fluency that can be used to support extra time. The advantage of the WJ IV is that there are no Americanisms (unlike the FAM) and remote practice is available for all 11 subtests with an e-stimulus book available.

If you would like to know more about this year's EAA changes, get three hours of free SASC accredited CPD and access helpful documents. Please log in to register at **https://bit.ly/3ktP7Ye**

### Reader in maths

A reader for maths is allowed to read symbols and unit abbreviations aloud rather than point. The JCQ rules for use of a reader (p36) state that a reader:

- may decode symbols and unit abbreviations in maths and science examinations as this will not affect the integrity of the assessment
- must have appropriate subject knowledge in order to act effectively as a reader in maths and science exams and decode symbols and formulae with accuracy.

However, the JCQ Decoding Guidance for Readers (2019) states: "We would expect this to be for a candidate who is unable to independently access any of the text and symbols in questions, such as a candidate with a significant visual impairment who cannot read Braille, cannot access tactile diagrams or, due to the severity of their impairment, cannot access the standard modified enlarged papers. It would not be expected that a reader would decode symbols and unit abbreviations for the majority of candidates with learning difficulties or other disabilities (who would be able to read the individual symbols/numbers). In this instance the reader would point to the symbol. The term 'decoding' means the naming of the symbol. It does not involve explaining when or how the symbol is to be used or describing the symbol."

### Scribe in maths

Typing and scribing in a maths exam is not usually helpful and so where writing is slow or illegible a Graphic Pad/Tablet can be used, though they may be challenging to learn to use. This may need to be agreed directly with the examining body.

Finally, exam access arrangements change every year and extra time is always a contentious access arrangement. Awarding bodies and Ofqual are keen to ensure that no unfair advantage is given.

**Further information:**

Assessment tests can be purchased from the Dyslexia Action Shop and Guild members get a 10% discount https://dyslexiaactionshop.co.uk/

Selected tests can also be borrowed from the library@dyslexiaaction.org.uk

### Further reading suggestions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# Literacy and homelessness: addressing the provision gap

**Julia Olisa, Chair and Co-founder of Literacy100, describes the work of this important charity.**

Literacy100 was founded in 2019 when two tutors working in homelessness organisations met and discovered that they shared similar concerns. In creating the charity, they distilled its mission into two strands. Central to the first is the vastly inadequate literacy provision for people who have been homeless. While reminding managers, funders and policymakers of the impact of illiteracy on both individuals and society, a spotlight could be shone on this issue. The second strand reflects an awareness that tutors and existing service providers generally have fewer training and networking opportunities than those in other education sectors. By addressing this gap, colleagues could enhance their professional development and become less isolated in their work.

The high prevalence of weak literacy amongst the homeless is shocking. Just over 50% of this population is estimated to have inadequate reading and writing skills to cope with everyday tasks such as reading letters, filling in forms, shopping or travelling by public transport (Dumoulin & Jones, 2014; Olisa, J, Patterson, J & Wright, F, 2010). Consequently, they experience significant disadvantages in their employment opportunities, social and political participation, mental health, and often family relationships (Bynner & Parsons, 2006; Dugdale & Clark, 2008).

After years of struggle, individuals who finally acknowledge the need to improve their basic skills can nonetheless find formal education a daunting prospect. Low levels of personal resilience are common, the causes of which are multiple and interlinked. Amongst them are:

- negative, sometimes traumatic childhood experiences at home and school
- unaddressed learning difficulties such as dyslexia
- mental and physical ill health, including the effects of substance abuse
- inadequate life-management skills
- low self-esteem and shame.

"To get people to help me with forms, I punched walls so my hand would swell up. I could not tell people that I was unable to read and write. That was too shameful."

Poor resilience impedes not only initial access to formal adult literacy courses, but also continuity of attendance and motivation. This is a problem for providers who are obliged to 'keep up the numbers' in their classes to maintain funding. But men and women who have been homeless very often have other priorities. Weekly visits to the job centre are non-negotiable and, like their typically frequent medical appointments, tend to fall on unpredictable days. Poor diary management or the challenge of tackling public transport may both be further barriers to regular participation.

"Now, when I look out of the bus window, I can start to recognise letters and even some words. I couldn't read at all before, but now I can see how much I am improving. It's amazing!"

The nature of formal courses can create further hurdles, particularly for those with the lowest levels of skill. Since funding is contingent on tested outcomes, curricula tend to be standardised and governed by tests. This system is unsuited to students with complex needs. As dyslexia specialists, we are familiar with the individualised, intensive support some learners require, ideally through one-to-one teaching. When this is not an option, some adults simply cannot keep up in class and fall by the wayside.

During a visit to the homelessness charity Thames Reach in 2006, the author of this article met a dyslexic service user who had encountered many of the problems outlined above. He finally shrugged his shoulders and commented, "Nothing works". The outcome of this meeting was a new in-house literacy service, founded so that people could access the kind of teaching that would work. It continues today, its approach acknowledging the importance of skilled teaching in an unthreatening environment where specific needs are addressed. These principles are mirrored in similar services within the sector and associated community organisations. Some employ professional tutors; others rely on qualified volunteers. Teaching is one-to-one or in small groups, courses sometimes (but not always) leading to formal qualifications.

But the availability of such provision falls well short of the need. There are plenty of examples of literacy 'support' that does not address underlying skill deficits. When literacy specialists are unavailable, homelessness centres might simply offer help to fill in forms or read letters. These services tend to be short-term and ad hoc (Jones, 2018).

Frustratingly, Literacy100's campaigning has been curtailed by the recent pandemic. But it will resume. In contrast, the charity's aim to support tutors has benefited from the trend towards online working. Seminars on good practice and regular, informal 'meet-ups' have given literacy practitioners from around the UK opportunities to learn and to meet their peers. This creates a valuable community of interest. Researchers and experts in the field complement these events by contributing blogs and articles to the Literacy100 website. We plan to improve the interactivity of our website for network members in the coming months – work in progress.

The Literacy100 team is optimistic that, once national restrictions are fully lifted, our campaigning will resume. Spirits will be raised further when we can finally reschedule the postponed Literacy100 inaugural conference, where friends and supporters can meet in person. Uppermost in our minds throughout all our activities is one key principle: that every citizen, regardless of experiences or fortune, should have access to the empowerment of literacy.

For more information go to: www.literacy100.org

The Thames Reach literacy service, based in south London, is currently looking for volunteers who are qualified teachers. Dyslexia specialists would be especially welcome. The time commitment is four hours, one day a week during school terms. If you are interested and would like to hear more about this opportunity, please email Julia Olisa at: julia@olisa.com

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# The Professional Tutoring Partnership: a year on

**Alison Farmer, Professional Tutoring Partnership Lead, describes the journey taken over the past year as a National Tutoring Programme partner providing additional support to schools and disadvantaged pupils.**

## Professional Tutoring Partnership – the journey

It's usual to begin the story of a journey at the starting point and to lead the reader along the route taken to arrive at the destination.

In the year and four months of the COVID-19 pandemic the concept of time in personal and public life has been turned upside down. For months on end, time seemed to stand still, with one day rolling into another, as we lived our lives, in the main, separated from one another in lockdown. As such, I have reflected the topsy-turviness by starting at the end (or nearly the end) of the National Tutoring Programme Phase 1, returning to the beginning, subsequently, to chronicle the ups and downs of the Professional Tutoring Partnership's inaugural year.

Writing this in June 2021, those of you who have school-age children or have been in schools during the summer term will know only too well that children have missed a substantial proportion of two years of education in school, with significant ramifications for their learning and well-being. In this context the feedback about the work of tutors and the Professional Tutoring Partnership as we approach the end of our Phase 1 journey is, I believe, a hopeful starting point for reflecting back and looking forward.

## Making a difference

The 85 tutors who are providing the 15 hours' subsidised tuition programme through the Professional Tutoring Partnership in phase one of the National Tutoring Programme are making a difference for over one thousand children and young people.

## A parent's perspective

*I wanted to email to offer some feedback with regards to my daughter's maths tutoring support on a Thursday afternoon. My perception is that S (her tutor) has made a significant positive impact on her confidence, self-esteem in her ability and her understanding. Every Thursday, she comes out of school bouncing with so much praise for her afternoon and spends the journey home in the car discussing what she has learned and has now understood. It is so refreshing to see my daughter more confident again with her maths. Thank you for putting this support in place for her; I do hope it can continue. I would be grateful if you could share our gratitude with S, her tutor.*

**A school's view**

*Our tutor was fabulous. She formed excellent relationships with the students and planned interesting and enjoyable work. She kept the school well informed of everything she was doing.*

**And more...**

*Our tutor has been fantastic – meeting the children's needs and working very well with us – a real asset to our school team.*

**The Partners and their commitment to children, young people and tutors**

The Professional Tutoring Partnership was founded on a commitment to help children and young people who had missed education during the first lockdown in the spring of 2020.

The professional associations comprising the British Dyslexia Association, Dyslexia Guild, Helen Arkell Dyslexia Charity and Patoss plus Real Group Ltd were determined that specialist teachers who were members or had been trained by these organisations had the opportunity to use their skills and expertise to support schools in the work they were doing to teach children and make up for lost education.

In August 2020 the opportunity to bid to become a Tuition Partner with the National Tutoring Programme sealed the partnership and was the point at which my journey with the Professional Tutoring Partnership began. This was an opportunity to raise the profile of tuition and make a difference.

Writing and submitting the bid was, of necessity, undertaken at pace. Mark Turner, managing director of Real Group Ltd, co-ordinated and marshalled those with the expertise needed to set out everything from the approach to tutor and school engagement, the 15 hours' tuition programme, quality assurance processes, financial planning and safeguarding.

A survey sent to professional organisation members provided feedback from more than 800 specialist teachers. It was the views of these tutors that informed our bid and gave us the confidence to form the Professional Tutoring Partnership, with the knowledge that like us, you felt passionately about children's education and the difference that we knew dyslexia-trained specialist teachers could make.

**Just the beginning**

On 2 November 2020 there were announcements in the national press about the National Tutoring Programme. The Professional Tutoring Partnership was one of 33 Tuition Partners approved out of more than 300 organisations that had applied. Once the news had sunk in, the hard work began.

Recruitment of specialist teachers with the help of Verifile, provider of safer recruitment, was underway. Virtual ID checks were undertaken by members of the Real Group team – you may have met some of them.

Development of the 15 hours' tuition programme and related training was led by Gill Cochrane, whose expert knowledge in meta-cognition and the evidence-base for specialist tuition was second to none and invaluable.

The professional partners identified mentors, Jennie, Humara, Vicky, Natasha and Caroline, to contribute expertise and lead quality assurance. Our mentors have been thoughtful, resourceful and always ready to roll up their sleeves and help.

The School Liaison Team (Olivia, Gillian and Joe) came on board and school engagement started for real. The Tuition Tracker was set up and developed. Thanks go to John Reid (IT Support) for his help with this and the myriad of data submissions that have been a fortnightly opportunity to wrestle with reports and reconcile figures.

**Things slowed down**

Then came lockdown two or three, depending on your location, and in January 2021, school closures. A few

tutors went into schools to provide tuition for key-workers' children. It was not the start to the spring term that any of us had hoped for.

**And now**

We are proud of the achievements of Professional Tutoring Partnership tutors. We hear the stories of school staff, children and tutors and know that despite many of you having experienced the most difficult of times, despite working in our separate spaces, in unfamiliar ways through technology rather than in person, we have, together, established a way of providing high quality subsidised tuition for children. We are confident that the tuition our specialist teachers have provided will help children and young people regain confidence and get their lives back on the right track.

Thank you for your part in the Professional Tutoring Partnership journey.

**Further information:**

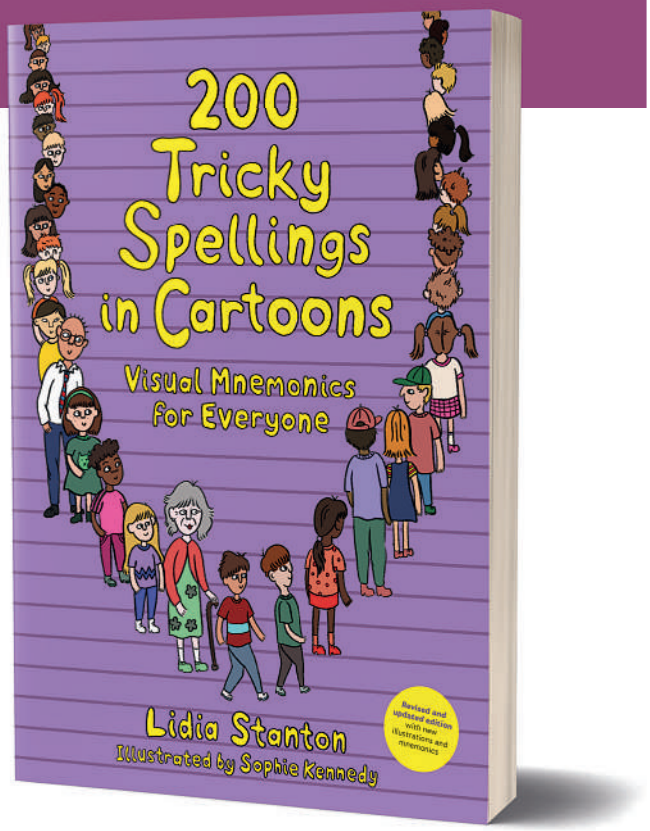
The National Tutoring Programme:
https://nationaltutoring.org.uk/
The Professional Tutoring Partnership:
https://tutorpartnership.com/

BOOK REVIEW

# 200 Tricky Spellings in Cartoons: Visual Mnemonics for everyone

(2021) Lidia Stanton. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

**Reviewed by David Bailey ADG, CPD Tutor, Dyslexia Action Training**




When asked to review this fabulous little book my first response was to approach it as a teacher looking for interesting little icebreakers and talking points that might engage otherwise reluctant readers. To my surprise my focus soon shifted to my own needs and interests. *200 Tricky Spellings in Cartoons: Visual Mnemonics for everyone* will appeal to a broad range of ages, abilities and indeed professions. It is clearly written and aimed at everyone. It will appeal to learners who are interested in wordplay, especially if they are a little artistic themselves. It is not a cover-to-cover book, it is one where you browse through and enjoy the humour and then find a word you need to work on.

Anyone who enjoys cartoon imagery, witticisms, word play and bon mots will find themselves dipping into it again and again. It is a book packed with interesting little picture clues – such as a pictorial way of remembering the number of Ss in desert and dessert taken from chapter 3. This chapter, *Confusing Pairs of Words*, has been great for my Entry 3 and Level 1 Functional Skills English learners. They have a series of similar sounding and confusing words which they may be tested on, and many of these are in Chapter 3 of this book.

Chapter 4 is great for learners who are struggling with *tricky everyday words*. It is particularly useful for learners moving on to Functional Skills English Level 2 or maybe those moving on to study other topics.

To give an example of a caption for *believe*:

"I want to believe him but what if it's a lie?" thought Lisa while packing her suitcase.

Or for *friend*: Frank wasn't simply a Friday friend. He was a friend to the end!

The bold text in the book helps, and asking learners to copy out these words and then highlight, underline or colour the key parts of the words allows them to absorb the words while also thinking of a paragraph that might expand on the caption and give it a context.

Chapter 5 is for academic and more formal words. It is also the place where I found the book of most personal use. I'd always struggled with graffiti for example but now I have seen the line: *Offensive or not graffiti is a form of art* – the two ffs are fixed in my mind. Similarly – medieval will always be correct in my writing now that I have seen die highlighted and a cartoon of the grim reaper.

So, if you or your students need a hand with one face and two specs of a professor or the pagan in propaganda this is the book for you.

BOOK REVIEW

# Observational Drawing for Students with Dyslexia

(2021) Qona Rankin and Howard Riley. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

**Reviewed by Jan Beechey MCILIP, Dyslexia Guild Librarian**

I would love to see this book sent to every art teacher in the UK. There are still so many neurodiverse students who are not recognised or understood and the fact that some of them are not diagnosed until adulthood is really disappointing. Not only is this book a really practical guide for those who would like to improve their drawing and observational skills, but it gives a really clear insight into some of the aspects of visual literacy that students with dyslexia may struggle with. These can be difficulties with short-term memory, co-ordination, planning and in the case of those with dyspraxia, muscle weakness which can affect how quickly the eye focuses or the hand tires.

There are some really good exercises in the book, starting with how to begin a drawing, building the structure and making the drawing appear three-dimensional. This then progresses to drawing as a five-step process which is based on an inclusive teaching strategy designed to help build on learning through repetitive procedures.

**"Not only is this book a really practical guide for those who would like to improve their drawing and observational skills, but it gives a really clear insight into some of the aspects of visual literacy that students with dyslexia may struggle with."**

There is a chapter on positive dyslexia which gives examples of dyslexic artists' creativity and of how some artists have found their difficulties have actually become strengths. The authors call upon us to get rid of the 'deficit model' which sees dyslexia as a disadvantage and embrace more positive approaches.

Some of the statements from students about their experiences took me straight back to school and college, where tutors just expect you to know how to do something, and when you don't, they lack the skills to show you how or to adapt their teaching style. This is a really quick and positive read that you can pass on to your colleagues to raise their awareness of dyslexia and dyspraxia.

BOOK REVIEW

# **The Trouble with Maths,** 4th edition (2021) and **More Trouble with Maths,** 3rd edition (2020)

Steve Chinn. Abingdon: Routledge. A David Fulton Book.

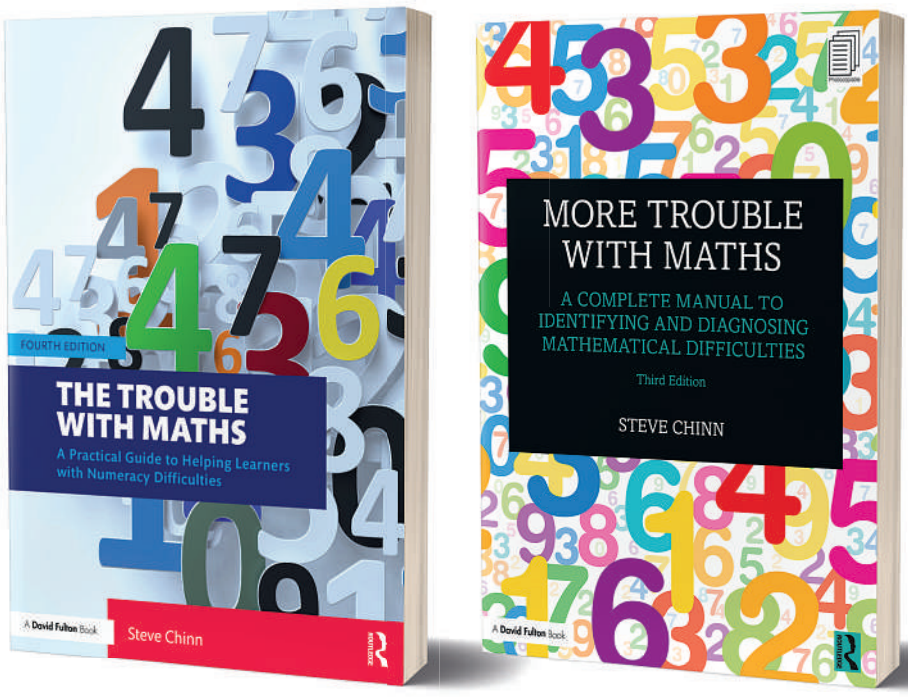
**Reviewed by Jan Beechey, MCILIP, Guild Librarian**

Steve Chinn is a very well-respected author and a visiting professor at the University of Derby. The first edition of *The Trouble with Maths* was published 16 years ago and it is testament to its popularity that it is now in a fourth edition. It is written for teachers, classroom assistants, learning support staff and parents, so that they can help pupils who are underachieving at maths, in a practical and easily understood way. The purpose of the book is to provide advice, guidance and practical activities in maths, to enable flexible solutions and so better support learners with maths difficulties. The book will also help you to understand the implication of underlying skills, such as working memory, on learning and underlying problems such as maths anxiety. There are useful checklists for the evaluation of books and software as well as an overview of resources.

*More Trouble with Maths* is a manual to identify and diagnose mathematical difficulties and is written to complement the other title. The manual provides a range of norm-referenced, standardised tests and diagnostic activities, each designed to reveal common error patterns in order to form a basis for intervention. The book also gives an overview to a range of difficulties such as anxiety, vocabulary and retention of facts. It gives guidance on the interpretation of data, so allowing assessment and diagnosis to become integrated into everyday teaching. There is a Dyscalculia Checklist, and a 15-minute Maths Test (ages 7 to 59). The tests are not restricted but it is essential to take a broad and flexible approach to diagnosis and assessment.

**READER OFFER:**
**For a 20% discount use code DMA20 at Routledge.com until 31 October 2021.**

For those of you assessing for learners aged 16+, there is guidance on the SASC website on the Downloads page which outlines key principles and describes who can assess for difficulties with maths and the training they should have undertaken. See: *SASC Guidance on assessment of Dyscalculia and Maths Difficulties within other Specific Learning Difficulties (2019). https://sasc.org.uk/Downloads.aspx*



BOOK REVIEW

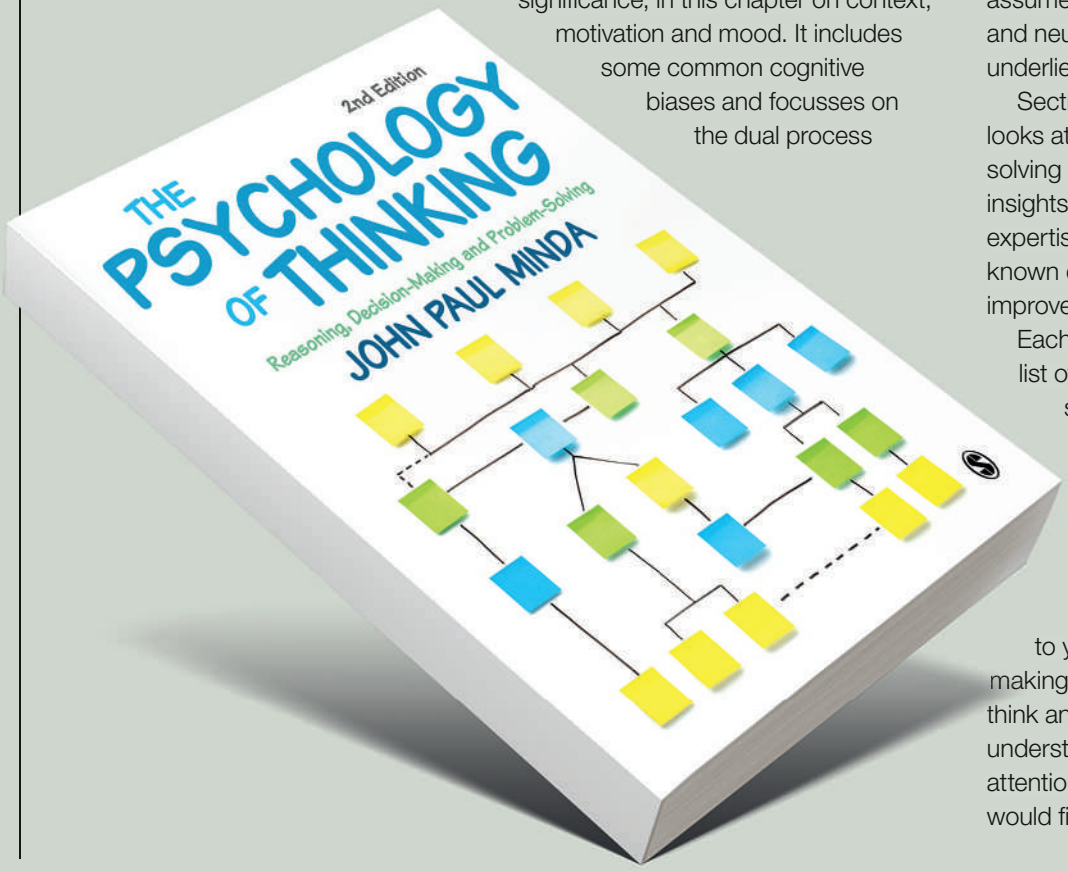
# The Psychology of Thinking: Reasoning, Decision-Making and Problem-Solving

(2021) John Paul Minda. London: Sage

**Reviewed by Jan Beechey MCILIP, Guild Librarian**

The author is both a member of the Brain and Mind Institute, and Professor of Psychology at Western University, Ontario, where he teaches a course on the Psychology of Thinking, the materials of which are included in this book. In this 2nd edition the topics and chapters have been structured into three sections. Section One, The Organisation of Human Thought, so called as a core aspect of how people think, involves comparing states or stimuli with past experience and forms the basis of the thinking process. As much of this relies on memory, there are chapters around memory, but also similarity and learning. There is much in this first section that any teacher would find interesting, including "neuromyths" around learning styles, attention and inattentional blindness. A whole chapter is devoted to language and thought to help you understand the role of language in cognition.

Section Two, *Thinking and Reasoning*, covers another topic which will be of significance, in this chapter on context, motivation and mood. It includes some common cognitive biases and focusses on the dual process account or dual systems theory, that assumes that there are two cognitive and neuropsychological systems that underlie the thinking process.




Section Three, *Thinking in Action*, looks at decision-making, problem-solving and expertise. There are insights into creative thinking and how expertise develops but also the well-known effect of expertise on thinking, improved memory!

Each chapter has a bullet point list of the chapter objectives, a summary, and questions to think about at the end.

As well as understanding the essential concepts in thinking, the book claims to help you understand and apply the theories to your everyday decision-making and problem-solving. I think any practitioner who wants to understand more about memory, attention, cognition and learning would find this a very valuable read.

**READER OFFER:**
**Get 20% discount on this title using code UKPSYCH20 at sagepub.co.uk**
**Offer valid until 31 October 2021**

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123
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