

Multi-sensory teaching methods
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Studies from the National Institutes of Child Health and Human Development have shown that for children with difficulties learning to read, a multi-sensory teaching method is the most effective teaching method.

This is especially crucial for a dyslexic child. But what does it mean? Using a multi-sensory teaching approach means helping a child to learn through more than one of the senses. Most teaching in schools is done using either sight or hearing (auditory sensations). The child's sight is used in reading information, looking at diagrams or pictures, or reading what is on the teacher's board. The sense of hearing is used in listening to what the teacher says. A dyslexic child may experience difficulties with either or both of these senses. The child's vision may be affected by difficulties with tracking, visual processing or seeing the words become fuzzy or move around. The child's hearing may be satisfactory on a hearing test, but auditory memory or auditory processing may be weak.

The answer is to involve the use of more of the child's senses, especially the use of touch and movement (kinetic). This will give the child's brain tactile and kinetic memories to hang on to, as well as the visual and auditory ones.

An example

An example will make this clear. The majority of dyslexic children experience confusion over the direction of 'b' and 'd'. They can both be seen as a stick with a circle at its base. But on which side does the circle sit? A teacher might give the child a tactile (touchy/feely) experience of the letter 'b' by getting the child to draw the letter really large on the carpet. This will involve the child using their arms, their sense of balance, their whole body. They will remember the day their teacher had them 'writing' on the carpet with their hand making this great big shape, and can use that memory the next time they come to write the letter.

Some teachers purchase letters made out of sandpaper so that the children can run their fingers over.

Problems with visual and/or auditory sensations

As dyslexic children may experience problems with visual and/or auditory sensations the use of more of the child's senses should be involved when learning, especially touch and movement. This is called multi-sensory teaching. The basic principle is: MAKE LEARNING TASKS PRACTICAL!

Ideas for the teaching of modern languages

- The spelling of words could be practised by writing them in the air in large letters (pupils could employ this method when trying to learn the vocabulary at home).
- New vocabulary:
 1. should be introduced with flashcards. Pupils to chant the new words along!

2. could be taught by handing around the objects in question (fruit, clothes...). The pupils say the words out loud when they have these objects in their hand.

- Pupils could draw pictures next to the new words in their books rather than writing out the English translation. (Translations, however, will have to be written out for words on the Dolch list.)

Color coding

- Color coding! In German there are three genders: Feminine, masculine and neuter, and we encourage the girls to learn the new words with their article. When we copy these words down we write the masculine words in **blue**, the feminine words in **red** and the neuter words in **green**. I have a set of homemade flash cards on red, blue and green card according to the gender of the word.
- If it is too difficult for the dyslexic pupil to copy from the board, vocabulary sheets should be provided, using the color coding discussed above.
- Words/phrases and grammatical concepts should be taught in context.

Acronyms

- Acronyms, rhymes and silly sentences can be taught in order to help pupils to remember rules.

Opportunities for acting and miming

- Modern language learning provides us with a lot of opportunity for acting and miming.
- The material needs to be revised often in as many different ways as possible in order to avoid the pupils getting bored. Role-plays, Miming games, and other non-competitive games like matching games, puzzles, guessing games, spelling/number bingo are especially helpful.

Off-white paper for worksheets

- If possible cream, pale yellow, green or blue paper should be used for handouts and worksheets as some dyslexic children find black on white difficult to read. When setting exercises on worksheets, use fonts without serifs, and the font size should not be smaller than 14.
- Clear illustrations are helpful, as text only is the most difficult