

Helpful hints for children with Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (including Dyspraxia)

Attention:

- Reduce sensory distractions in the environment – remove visual distraction, have the work area clean and have the materials close at hand i.e. to minimise eye movements have the reference material close at hand.
- Adapt activities – break down work periods into smaller segments and increase the attractiveness of the work e.g. use bright colours.
- Block out non relevant sensory information – feel movement patterns (i.e. draw/write with eyes closed? Block out sounds and use a frame/'window' around work, so only the work to be done is actually showing.

Tips for improving attention when hyper active

- Strong Man press-ups – child lies on their tummy on the floor and pushes up through his outstretched arms. Try doing press-ups against the wall or down on a desk. Squashing yourself to the floor encourage your child to place the palms of his hands on the top of his head and press down for 25 seconds.
- Squashy ball – encourage your child to hold the ball between two flat hands in front of the chest. Squash the ball hard to try and keep it flattened.
- Squashing yourself into the floor – encourage your child to place the palms of his hands on the top of his head and press down for 25 seconds.
- Use a air filled cushion to sit on available fro www.sissel.com

Tips for reading

- Eliminate visual distractions
- Present small amounts of work at a time
- The use of an angled surface to prop the book on, or a book stand next to or above the paper to avoid losing the place improves eye movements.
- Use a 'window' (a narrow rectangle cut out in a piece of card) to isolate sections of the text.
- Use a highlighter pen to make relevant/important areas to be read stand out.
- Use handouts to supplement blackboard work.

Tips for Writing

Handwriting – spacing

- Use a concrete clue e.g. an emery board as a space between words. 'one finger' space method.
- Use different coloured lines on paper i.e. top line red, middle line blue and baseline red.
- Allow child to check through their work and highlight the under/over spaced words/letters
- Use graph paper to provide a guideline for lining up rows.

When copying from the board:

- Segment work by using colour coding and borders to make it visually easier to locate.
- Encourage the child to read the sentence before writing it.
- Reduce the pressures on the child by photocopying part of it for them.
- Copying from paper next to them is easier than from the blackboard to the page.
- An angled board may assist copying speed, reducing the distance the eyes need to travel.

Letter reversals, letters upside down and possible confusion of capital and lowercase letters:

- Teach that all letters begin at the top, except 'e' and 'd' which begin in the middle.
- Use pictograms to help differentiate between letters such as 'b' and 'd' by using a diagram of a bed.
- Use a reference strip of letters above work to refer to.

Letters missed out or jumbled when copying:

- Have work to be copied by the side of their paper rather than on the board.
- Use a window tracker made out of card for them to move across work when copying so they don't have as much to look at

When behaviour is a problem:

- Prepare the room to reduce distractions
- Make sure he is sitting comfortably, sit on a chair for increased attention rather than the floor
- Give clear, simple instructions, help him to direct himself by asking him simple questions or requests e.g. what colour pencil next?

Redirection:

- Help him to stay with the activity by redirecting him physically, visually or verbally
- Observe when he has had enough or has become too tired.
- Help him to finish the activity within a reasonable amount of time, so he will be interested in trying again on another occasion.

Completing tasks:

- Use turn taking. This helps speed up the activity, encourages active participation and is important for communication and interaction
- Indicate when the activity is finished
- Praise him for helping

Setting limits and expectations:

If co-operation and/or attention is a problem, it may help to set some simple boundaries for him e.g. if you want to play you must sit down first. One more bead to thread, then we will finish.

- Giving him simple choices can help co-operation
- Give praise for co-operation and staying within the set limits
- Remember that his performance will vary from day to day even hour to hour.

Also

1. allow extra time
2. do lots of practice
3. use repetition
4. do not pressure
5. allow variability

Strategies to help with motor planning and organisational skills.

1. Help identify steps needed to begin and accomplish the task. Have them repeat directions and, if possible, write down the steps.
2. Ask them questions of what they are going to do and how they are going to do it.
3. Encourage them to verbalise what they are doing whilst carrying out the activities
4. Give a short assignment so that the child can feel instant success in completing a task. Document the length of time he can focus on the task and structure the assignment so that it can be completed in that length of time.
5. Set up a system for checking off steps as they are accomplished.
6. Giving one direction at a time. After one action is successfully completed, add another direction.
7. Minimise visual distractions. Check for clutter in classroom environment.
8. Art projects that require assembling parts to create a project. This challenges the child's ability to develop strategies for organising parts as they relate to the whole.
9. Reviewing how to play the game before actually playing it. Demonstrate verbally, as well as visually.
10. Ask questions more than giving them the answer, allowing them time to think through their answer.

11. Have consistent structured routines.
12. Plan their week and stick to activities on the same day and time of the week e.g. swimming on Thursday at 4pm.
13. Keep a school diary making sure they write in this at the end of each class, e.g. what homework has to be done, page references, date for which homework needs to be completed etc?
14. Encourage a 'buddy' system i.e. another child assist with organising.
15. Decide on a mutually agreed award – perhaps each term – that they should receive for being independent in managing their time, homework and so on. A simple star chart with realistically achievable score may be a way of measuring success.
16. Praise success and do not emphasis failings or difficulties
17. When learning a new skill follow these steps:
 - a. Physical help: place your hand over his and guide it through the movement. As the child feels the movement and gets the idea let him try on his own.
 - b. Visual clues: Point to what has to be done e.g. point to the spot where the child has to pape the picture or he copies your movements.
 - c. Verbal clues: Tell them what they are doing with clear, simple language.

A combination of these is usually most useful for children with motor planning difficulties.

Activity ideas to help improve proprioception and vestibular processing which can be integrated into PE.

☺ **Jumping** e.g.

- Along a line
- Over a rope
- Jumping relay, with ball/balloon between knees or feet.
- Zig zag along a line
- Into something soft
- On paving squares
- On inner tube – two feet around edge

☺ **Animal Walks** e.g.

- Bunny hops
- Crab walks

- Frog jumps
- Bear walks
- Duck waddles
- Leapfrog
- Tip toe/heel walk

☺ **Space Hopper**

☺ **Jumping** – jumping on a trampoline or mattress

☺ **Carrying Heavy Items** (e.g sand bag, box of Lego, chair)

☺ **Walking along a line** – with book or beanbag on head or in hands

☺ **Crawling** – forwards, backwards, sideways, arm and leg on same side together, and arm and leg on opposite sides together

☺ **Rolling** – forwards and backwards over a 40 gallon drum or big ball

☺ **Knee walk** – walk on knees with hands holding feet at ankles and feet touching thighs.

☺ **Wall Rise** – begin sitting on floor with knees up against chest and head, shoulders and back against wall. Without using hands, work oneself up along the wall so you finish by standing up with back against the wall.

☺ **Games**

- Tug of war
- Stepping stones
- Pretend tight rope walking
- Kicking a ball, stopping it with feet before kicking it back
- Musical statues
- Hopscotch and other hopping games
- Any ball games
- Jumping into hoop
- ‘Heel to toe’ games