



Dyslexia Information Sheet

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What is Dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty (SLD) that is a lifelong neuro-developmental difference. At all stages, dyslexia is on a continuum varying from mild to severe, with a range of strengths and difficulties. Dyslexia affects the basic skills of accurate and fluent word reading, spelling, and writing and is considered a print disability. The prevalence rate for Dyslexia is 10% or 1 in 10 of the population. Students with dyslexia/SLD are the largest group accessing college disability support services in higher education in Ireland.

Common features include difficulties in phonological processing (recognising and manipulating sounds), challenges in reading, spelling, and writing, slow reading and writing speed, problems with sequencing, issues with visual and auditory processing, working memory limitations, directional confusion, and a potential family history of similar difficulties.

It is important to remember that dyslexia is not related to intelligence; individuals with dyslexia can have normal or above-average cognitive abilities. With appropriate support, interventions and accommodations, individuals with dyslexia can develop strategies to overcome their challenges and succeed in academic and professional settings.

More Information

Watching this [Ted-Ed Talk](#) video about dyslexia provides an overview of the experience and enhances understanding of the condition.

Characteristic features of dyslexia are:

Difficulty with Phonological Processing:



Phonological processing involves recognising and manipulating the sounds of spoken language. A core difficulty with phonological processing reduces automaticity with sound/letter correspondence, which is needed for decoding and pronouncing words for reading. Students with dyslexia often struggle with recognising rhyming patterns and encoding for spelling.

Writing Issues:



Dyslexia can impact writing skills, making it challenging to organise and express thoughts coherently. This can lead to difficulties in grammar, sentence structure and overall composition.

Reading Challenges:



Learners with dyslexia may have trouble decoding words, which makes reading fluently and accurately challenging. They might have difficulty recognising sight words, and reading comprehension can also be affected by the effort spent decoding individual words. Dyslexia has a genetic component. It is common for individuals with dyslexia to have a family history or similar difficulties in reading and writing.

Visual and Auditory Processing Issues:



Some learners with dyslexia may have difficulties processing visual and auditory information efficiently. They might also have difficulty tracking accurately when reading, experiencing glare from black-on-white text or blur from certain fonts. Check out the [Dyslexia simulator from AbilityNet](#).

Working Memory



Working memory involves holding and manipulating information temporarily while performing cognitive tasks. Learners with dyslexia may find it difficult to hold information in their short-term memory, which can impact their ability to follow instructions, remember multi-step directions, or keep track of information while reading and writing.

Co-occurring difficulties



Co-occurring difficulties may be seen in oral language skills and reading fluency, motor co-ordination, mental calculation, concentration, spatial orientation issues, and personal organisation, but are not, by themselves, markers of dyslexia.

More Information

View [Arije-Aike de Haas](#), a dyslexic education scientist. He aims to share his knowledge and provide a shortcut to mastering dyslexia and understanding those who experience it. He shares tips for learning, coping, teaching, and more on his [YouTube channel](#).

How does Dyslexia impact a student's college experience?

- Students with dyslexia may have difficulty seeing print, presentation slides, and whiteboards. This can be due to challenges with visual processing and decoding text.
- Students with dyslexia may experience difficulties with notetaking during lectures or tutorials. This can be due to challenges with processing information quickly or accurately.
- It is not uncommon for some students with dyslexia to experience a significant difference between their oral and written language abilities.
- Completing academic tasks may take significantly longer, particularly if students need extra time converting materials into accessible formats.
- Students with dyslexia often have difficulties with spelling and grammar and find it challenging to impose order on their ideas, particularly in written form.
- Reduced reading pace and reading comprehension skills affecting performance in exams.
- Some students with dyslexia experience print-in-motion when reading. View [here](#) to get a sense of how the dyslexia brain decodes text from Ted Ed: What is dyslexia?
- Many people with dyslexia experience short-term memory challenges, making it difficult for them to retain information such as instructions or directions. This can be frustrating and may require alternative learning strategies to improve retention.
- May experience greater stress and frustration than neurotypical learners as they engage with new information.

Other differences

- Difficulties with organising and sequencing tasks can lead to ineffective time management or workload management and meeting deadlines.
- Students with dyslexia may have to work harder than others and often work/study extra hours to overcome daily challenges. When they are tired, their dyslexic 'symptoms' can be more pronounced as they do not have the energy to employ their usual coping strategies.

- Students who have been recently diagnosed may experience emotional difficulties, which can affect their self-esteem and confidence.
- Many learners stay in their fear and comfort zones due to a fear of failure, success, and judgment. As educators, we must ensure that our students move into the learning and growth zones for true learning. Stressed, anxious, and fearful students cannot and do not learn effectively.

Strengths

Learners who experience dyslexia may show strengths in the following areas:

- People with dyslexia may develop great skills, persistence, and ability to deal with challenges as they are familiar with finding workarounds to compensate for their weaknesses.
- Although many people think in a sequential way, it has been suggested that people with dyslexia often have strengths in problem-solving and lateral thinking.
- People with dyslexia may show strengths in areas such as reasoning and in visual and creative fields.
- Working memory may be less efficient than people without dyslexia, but long-term memory may be excellent.

Dyslexia is a spectrum; each person is affected differently by their strengths and challenges.

Famous People with Dyslexia and Well-Known People

Many famous individuals have been open about their struggles with dyslexia and have achieved great success in various fields. With determination, unique perspectives, and often exceptional talents in other areas, people with dyslexia can make significant contributions to various fields. Here are a few notable examples:

- **Albert Einstein:** One of the most famous physicists in history, Albert Einstein is believed to have dyslexia. He faced difficulties in school and struggled with language and reading, but he excelled in mathematics and physics. His groundbreaking theories, such as the theory of relativity, revolutionised our understanding of the universe.
- **Leonardo da Vinci:** The Renaissance polymath Leonardo da Vinci, known for his contributions to art, science, and various other fields, is also believed to have had dyslexia. His unique way of thinking and approaching problems set him apart from his contemporaries.

- **Richard Branson:** The British entrepreneur and founder of the Virgin Group, Richard Branson, has dyslexia. Despite struggling in school, he built a vast business empire that included ventures in music, airlines, telecommunications and more.

The following is a [list from Dyslexia Ireland](#) of well-known actors, musicians, athletes, artists, designers and others with dyslexia compiled by Dyslexia Ireland.

Routes to identification:

An appropriately qualified Psychologist who is a member of their respective professional or regulatory body or an assessor who is accredited by PATOSS.

Useful links and resources

- [Ahead](#)
- [British Dyslexia Association](#)
 - [Dyslexia Factsheet](#)
 - [Dyscalculia \(Adult\) Information Sheet](#)
 - [Workplace Information Sheet](#)
- [Call Scotland's](#) website is worth checking out, particularly its [Information](#), [Learning](#) and [Downloads](#) sections for resources.
- [Dyslexia Ireland](#)
 - [Dyslexia Association Further Education Sector Guidelines](#)
- [Lexxic.com](#) - Dyslexia Resources

Organisation and Time Management.

Organisation and Time Management skills include the importance of planning and organisation for a successful academic journey. As the new academic year begins, all students are confronted with managing assignments and meeting deadlines. Effective time management is essential, and students often fail not due to lack of planning, but because their planning is ineffective.

As this new academic year commences, you may be a recent secondary school graduate, a returning student, or someone who left school early. One thing is common to all: **You are embarking on a new learning journey together.**

Every program will have a few challenging tasks to complete. Keeping track of those tasks and their deadlines is a common source of stress for many college students.

During orientation and induction, you receive

- A Campus Map
- Programme Timetable
- Assessment Schedule

Organising the orientation and induction materials (timetable, assessment schedule, and so on) is important. **Do not shove them in a folder, never to see daylight again!** Please read through them carefully and extract the information you need to be successful in the programme you are about to study.

This guide aims to help you start the semester, schedule coursework early, and get organised for the semester ahead. It is strongly suggested that you have a Semester Startup organisation and time management plan **by the end of week 4 to keep you connected with your programme and to reach your potential in your studies.**

Let's get started

Organise your time: Assistive technology and pen-and-paper scheduling tips.

Learning how to use assistive technology can be transformative and life-changing. The following are recommendations for assistive technology and pen-and-paper study tips for **all students** looking to improve their organisation and time management skills.

Technology is not a fix-all, but it can benefit **all learners**, particularly individuals with neurodivergent profiles such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, autism, and ADHD.

When used correctly, assistive technology can support the development of literacy skills, access to information, writing, proofreading, organisation, time management, and memory.

Developing study skills using pen-and-paper techniques alongside assistive technology tools is perfectly fine. The range of assistive technology available constantly expands, so choosing the right tools at the right time is essential. For example, Microsoft Outlook Calendar and To-Do app features are built into Microsoft 365 and are easily accessible. A paper diary and a handwritten to-do list can serve the same purpose. Most importantly, learners should start and maintain a time management system that works for them, giving them a sense of control and empowerment over their studies.

Understanding the purpose of a daily and weekly schedule is crucial. It helps you manage your time effectively, prioritise tasks, and balance your academic and personal life.

Why You Should Use a Weekly Schedule

Next, to start a weekly schedule, please watch the following two videos to get an overview of why and how to create a weekly schedule:

- 1) [Why Use a Weekly Schedule?](#) Video source: Academic Success, Algonquin College.
- 2) [How to Create a Weekly Schedule?](#) Video source: Academic Success, Algonquin College.

You can create a daily, weekly and monthly digital schedule by using one of the following methods:

- A Microsoft Outlook Calendar will allow you to organise a daily, weekly and monthly plan.
- A paper diary (A5 Academic week-to-view is recommended) will allow you to organise a daily, weekly and monthly plan.
- Download a weekly template you can fill out in Word or Excel.

Microsoft Outlook Calendar



Microsoft Outlook Calendar, a free online tool in Microsoft 365, can assist in scheduling and managing time for college and completing study tasks, projects, and part-time work. It will also help you track deadlines and key dates daily, weekly, and monthly. The following video will explain how to use the calendar function in Microsoft 365 to create a weekly schedule.

[How to Create a Weekly Schedule through Outlook in Office 365](#) Video source: Academic Success Algonquin College.

Digital tools like Microsoft Outlook Calendar can help you stay organised and are **accessible on all your devices**. Use **reminders and alarms** for important tasks and deadlines to ensure you do not miss anything. Digital tools are flexible, making it easy to adjust your plans as needed.

A paper Diary is a good tool, too!



Sample diary A5 week-to-view

While digital tools are popular and have benefits, there are several reasons why a paper diary might be handy. It can be a reliable daily and weekly planning tool without worrying about low battery or Wi-Fi. Unlike digital tools, a paper diary does not require learning new software or apps. It also does not come with notifications, social media, or internet access, allowing you to plan your day without the temptation of distractions.

It is a **physical item** that can be a constant visual reminder of your schedule and tasks, making it easier to keep track of your commitments. It is straightforward, accessible, and ready to use immediately, which is ideal if you are not comfortable with digital technology yet. If you prefer paper, consider buying an A5 week-to-view Academic Diary or mid-year diary for 2024/2025 at any stationery shop for an affordable price.

Choose a scheduling method to organise your time a digital calendar or paper diary.

Once you have chosen a scheduling method you are most comfortable with, remember that the workload will be higher in the second half of the semester than in the first half.

What to include when organising your daily/weekly schedule:

Review your timetable

Key: Be sure to update your timetable if any changes occur during the semester, such as dates, times, or room changes, and adjust your schedule accordingly.

1. **Add commitments**, such as lectures and tutorials, into your schedule.
2. **Add any weekly appointments**, meetings, and part-time work.
3. **Set aside specific time for studying and working on your coursework**, such as assigned readings for a tutorial. Spread out these study blocks throughout the week, preferably avoiding busy days. Schedule these study hours for when you are most productive, considering whether you are more alert in the morning or at night.

Next, review the assessment schedule:

Key: It is essential to remember that not all coursework may be included in the assessment schedule at the beginning of the semester. Whenever your lecturer communicates any changes, like deadlines or continuous assessment adjustments during a lecture, tutorial, via email, or Moodle, it is crucial to update your assessment schedule as you progress through your program. It is vital to reflect these changes in your daily and weekly schedules.

4. Add continuous assessment deadlines.
5. **Keep a physical copy:** It is a good idea to keep a physical copy of your timetable and assessment schedule for quick reference. Consider keeping one on your bedroom door and another in your college bag to avoid surprises regarding deadlines.

Your digital or paper schedule does not need to be a work of art. It is a tool to help you plan your academic workload, stay organised, and reduce stress and overload.

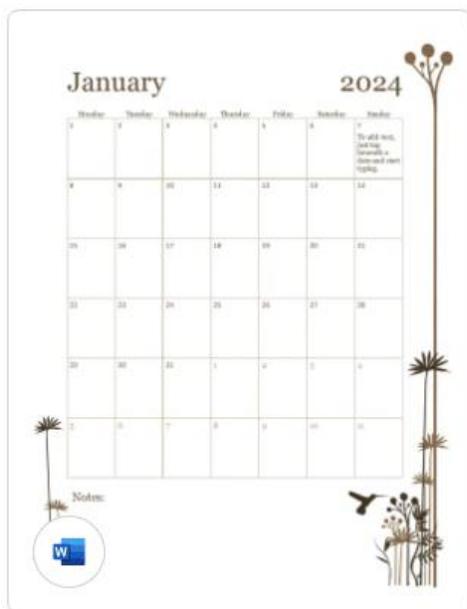
View [Why is the semester plan important?](#) Video source: Academic Success Algonquin College.

The following is a sample Assessment Schedule taken from Semester Two Stage 1

STAGE 1 E&H – SEMESTER TWO

Semester 2	Introduction to Drama & Theatre	English, CA & MS Intro to Fiction	Irish Writing 1960	Debating History	History Re-Imagining Ireland 1500-1700	The Age of Exploration
Week 1 22 - 26 Jan	Beginning of 7 weekly MC in-lecture Quiz (3% per Quiz)					
Week 2 29 Jan - 4 Feb						
Week 3 5-11 Feb	Tutorial Presentation (10%)					600 word Assessment (10%) (Group A) 600 word Assessment (10%) (Group B)
Week 4 12 - 18 Feb						
Week 5 19 – 25 Feb	Mid-Term	Mid-Term	Mid-Term	Mid-Term	Mid-Term	Mid-Term
Week 6 26 Feb – 3 Mar	1250 – 1500 word essay (50%)			1250-1500 word Essay (50%)		600 word Assessment (20%) (Group A)
Week 7 4-10 Mar						
Week 8 11-17 Mar						

Remember, no continuous assessment coursework or end-of-semester exam should catch you by surprise. It is crucial to keep your assessment schedule updated with any changes. This will help you stay organised with your coursework and ensure you submit your work on time and in the correct format to avoid losing marks!



[An accessible Microsoft Calendar](#)

This is an [accessible Microsoft Calendar](#) that can be downloaded and customised in Word. Some learners need to take their planning a step further and view a month's main tasks at a glance. This calendar can be used in digital or paper format and is a good visual reminder of key appointments and deadlines.

To-Do: Lists, Tasks & Reminders

Knowing when tasks are due and planning ahead can help you manage your academic workload, stay organised, and reduce stress and overwhelm.

Use a to-do list to keep track of smaller tasks because the small things add up! Watch the video below: it will help you figure out what items to include on your to-do list and where to find the tasks you need to include.

Use a to-do list to check off completed tasks and prioritise upcoming ones. Review your to-do list at the end of each day and update it for the next day.

View [How to Create a Task List](#). This video includes how to prioritise using the ABC 123 method. Video source: Academic Success Algonquin College.

You can create a to-do list by using one of the following methods:

- Microsoft To-Do app (in Microsoft 365)
- Paper To Do
- Or
- This is an accessible [Microsoft To-Do List](#) that can be downloaded and customised in Word.

Microsoft To Do: Lists, Tasks & Reminders App for Organisation & Time Management



Microsoft To Do Microsoft To Do app is a simple and intelligent to-do list that helps users manage all tasks in one place. It is accessible through your Microsoft 365 college email account and syncs across iPhone, Android, Windows, and the web.

Whether you want to **increase** your productivity, **decrease** your stress levels, or **free up** some mental space, Microsoft To Do makes it easy to plan your day and manage your life.

With Microsoft To Do, you can:

- Stay focused with My Day, create a personalised daily planner with suggested tasks
- Get your lists anywhere, on any device
- Personalize your lists with bold and colourful backgrounds
- Set one-time or recurring due dates and reminders
- Sync your tasks between Outlook and To Do

View the following resources to see **why** creating a Microsoft To-Do list will help you keep track of your tasks and how to use Microsoft To Do.

- 1) Why is the task list important? Video source: Academic Success, Algonquin College.
- 2) Mature Students may identify with this video: Mature Student Introduction to Time Management. Video source: Academic Success, Algonquin College.
- 3) How to Create a Task List. (Note: In this video, Semester Plan is your Schedule of Assessments, and Bright Space is similar to Moodle)
- 4) How to use Microsoft To Do: Organize your Day by Managing Tasks Video source: Jamie Keet Teacher's Tech
- 5) To-Do-Quick-Guide.pdf from Microsoft.

The following are key tips for creating a to-do list:

1. **Daily To-Do list:** Every evening, list tasks you must complete the next day. Prioritise them by importance and deadlines.
2. **Break Tasks into Steps:** For larger tasks, break them down into smaller, manageable steps. This makes them less overwhelming and easier to tackle.
3. **Priorities Tasks:** Use methods like ABC 123 to determine which tasks are urgent and important and which can be scheduled for later. View the [How to Create a Task List](#) to use ABC 123 (if you have not viewed it already).
4. **Update** your dairy with daily to-do tasks.
5. **Tick off Completed Tasks:** There is satisfaction in seeing tasks get completed. This also helps you track your progress and stay motivated.

The following two videos are for the tech-savvy:

The following video demonstrates creating a To-Do list within the Outlook Calendar. [How to Use Outlook Calendar as a To-Do List \(Tips & Tricks\)](#) Video source: Simpletivity YouTube channel.

See how to use more capabilities built into [Outlook Calendar—Meetings vs. Appointments](#). This video is comprehensive and recommended for the tech-savvy but select only the tips you need to create your weekly schedule—keep it simple! The Video source is Chris Menard's YouTube channel.

Integrating all three

- 1) Weekly Schedule (digital or paper) 2) Timetable & To Do list, 3) Assessments Schedule.

How to integrate all four organising and time managing tools. Use a weekly schedule (a Microsoft Outlook Calendar or a paper diary) to integrate your Timetable, Assessment Schedules, and to-do lists. This will help you see everything in one place.

First view [Using time management tools together](#) Video Source: Video source: Academic Success, Algonquin College to get an overview of how to get started.

Start a weekly schedule, such as in Microsoft Outlook Calendar or a paper diary, it is important to figure out how to incorporate a task list. Remember that the task list bridges upcoming deadlines and your weekly schedule.

Then, look at your assessment schedule and what needs to be done for your programme each week. Look ahead: is anything big coming up in the next few weeks that you should start now? **Remember that the workload will be higher in the second half of the semester than in the first half.**

Next, write down upcoming items to create your daily task list. Add personal commitments such as getting groceries and appointments. Add time for each task, then prioritise using the ABC 123 method to help you identify the key tasks to complete that day. (You can view the [How to create a task list video](#) if you need to revisit the ABC 123 method for prioritising.)

Then, look at your weekly schedule and figure out when you will complete each task. Look for blocks of time that you have specifically set aside for study or personal commitments. If you have a lot to complete on your To Do list in a particular week, you may need to find additional time in your schedule to get everything done.

Finally, reflect and adapt by regularly evaluating what is working and what is not and adjusting your strategies to find what best supports your organisational and time-management planning.

It is good to know

The percentage of marks assigned to a particular assessment reflects the work you are expected to put into that task. In terms of assessment preparation, as a broad outline, for each 1 per cent offered, you should expect to do 30 minutes of work. So, for a 10% assignment, you should expect to do 5 hours of work, while for a larger assignment like an essay worth 60%, you should expect 30 hours of work.

Work backwards from the due date for each assessment to create a timeline of what needs to be done and when. Estimate each task's length and set start dates accordingly in your diary, including research, drafting, revising, and finalising.

See the table below for guidance:

Assessment Percentage Mark	Expected Preparation Time
10%	5 hours
20%	10 hours
30%	15 hours
40%	20 hours
50%	25 hours
60%	30 hours
70%	35 hours
80%	40 hours
90%	45 hours
100%	50 hours

The nature of the assessment may also affect the amount of work you are expected to do. If you need clarification, you should always seek guidance from your lecturer.

Pay attention to your progress and connect with student services to help you achieve better grades, manage procrastination and stress, and boost motivation.

Summary – Organisation and Time Management.

During induction, students receive essential course materials such as programme timetables and assessment schedules. It is vital to organise these materials rather than overlook them. **By the end of week 4, students are encouraged to develop a time management plan/schedule to stay connected with their program.**

This guide suggests using a combination of assistive technology and traditional pen-and-paper methods to manage time. Tools like Microsoft Outlook Calendar and To-Do lists are recommended for scheduling and task management. These are especially beneficial for **all students** but particularly for learners with a neurodivergent profile like dyslexia, ADHD or autism. However, a paper diary can also be an effective tool, offering a distraction-free way to plan and stay on top of tasks.

Students are advised to regularly review their timetable, add all commitments, and allocate dedicated study time. Equally important is to keep the assessment schedule up to date with any changes that may occur throughout the semester. This ensures that students are always prepared for their academic responsibilities.

In addition to scheduling, maintaining a to-do list is key. Breaking down tasks into smaller steps, prioritising them using methods like ABC 123, and checking off completed tasks can significantly reduce stress and improve productivity.

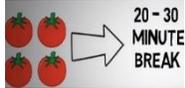
Finally, the guide recommends integrating all tools—weekly schedules, timetables, assessment schedules, and to-do lists—into an organised system. This approach and regular reflection and adjustment of these strategies will empower students to manage their academic workload. It will ensure learners **remain connected with their program of study and achieve their potential for a well-rounded and successful semester.**

The following apps will help you to time manage and focus

The Pomodoro Technique for Time Management



Discover the benefits of the Pomodoro technique by viewing the [Pomodoro Technique](#) Video Source: Study Lab. The Pomodoro technique lets students divide their work into achievable intervals with short breaks, helping them stay focused and empowered.



Try the [Pomodoro Tracker](#)

Flora Green Focus



- The Flora Green Focus app blocks distractions from social media and smartphones while studying.
- The app is a gamified Pomodoro timer designed to help students stay focused and productive.
- It encourages users to put down their phones and block distracting apps like Instagram for a limited period.
- During a study session, a virtual tree grows within the app.
- If users leave the app to use their phone, the virtual tree dies.
- Flora motivates users to stay on track and build positive study habits.

Flora Green Focus App can be downloaded from the iOS App Store and Google Play; [visit Flora Green Focus for more information.](#)

Noisli

Noisli

Noisli is a digital tool to help you focus. [Noisli](#) provides background sounds that help mask annoying noises, improving focus and boosting productivity. Noisli can be downloaded from iOS App Store and Google Play; visit [Noisli](#) for more information and try the Free version.

Mind mapping applications – by hand and digital software.



To begin mind mapping by hand or by software, it is essential to first grasp the theory behind it. Check out [Mindmap's Unleashed Practical Induction Guidelines](#). Mind mapping is a personalised learning technique, so it is crucial to have a good understanding of the fundamentals.

Coggle

The [Coggle](#) video from the Dyslexia Association of Ireland (DAI) demonstrates how Coggle can be used for visual thinking, planning, and creating mind maps. There is more information available on [Coggle](#), and it offers a free plan.

Xmind

Xmind is a full-featured mind-mapping and brainstorming app. It now offers two plans for users: the Xmind Free Plan and the Xmind Pro Plan. Below are the differences between the Free Plan and the Pro Plan in Android Xmind. In the Free Plan, users can insert notes, markers, stickers, hyperlinks, labels, and images into the topics. They can also access [downloads from Xmind](#).

Currently, there is no time restriction for using the free version, and you can get access to most of the features of Xmind for Desktop. However, keep in mind that the free version is available for personal use as all the exported files will have a watermark of Xmind trial mode. Access [XMind templates, tutorials, and training from Biggerplate](#).

MindMeister

MindMeister is an easy-to-use mind-mapping tool. Loads of different templates and images to help visualise your plan. If you want to learn how to set up a free account, check out the [MindMeister tutorial Step-by-Step Beginners Guide 2023](#), available on YouTube. This tutorial, presented by [Sharon's Tutorials, provides an excellent overview of the features of the free version of MindMeister](#).

MindMeister offers a Basic free plan without time limitations. You can work on a maximum of 3 mind maps. If you delete one mind map, you can create another one. If you like the software, an educational plan on a subscription basis costs €3 monthly. You can check out the [MindMeister tutorial playlist](#) for more in-depth product functionalities.

Moodle – Mind Mapping Resources by hand

Check out the 'Assistive Technology–Digital Skills Workshops' on Moodle and scroll down to the 'How to Mind Map' section for resources /guides on mind mapping.

Technology for Reading (Text to Speech)

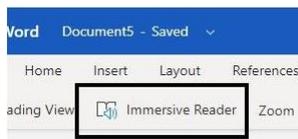
Text-to-Speech

Text-to-speech technology is not new, but it is not as widely known or used as it should be. A "text-to-speech" program, or "text reader," on your computer or tablet can read text from a document or web page to you using a computer voice. This technology can read Word documents, PDFs, web pages, emails, and more.

Text-to-speech features make it easier for students to **access, process, focus attention, and retain information in memory**. Text-to-speech offers a **multi-sensory learning approach** focusing on word-specific learning to improve spelling and text recognition skills.

Many applications provide text-to-speech and built-in functionality across devices. The main types of assistive technology (AT) that students may use are explained below.

How to access Immersive Reader in Microsoft 365



1. Sign in to your Microsoft 365 college account email (student number@carlowcollege.ie)
2. Open a Microsoft Office Word document
3. Click the 'View tab' at the top of the Word document
4. Click "Immersive Reader"

When you sign in with your Microsoft 365 college account email (student number@carlowcollege.ie), you have access to a helpful text-to-speech (TTS) reading tool called Immersive Reader (IR) in Word online. This tool allows you to have Word online and webpages read aloud to you, adjust text size, change the background colour for easier reading, and even translate information.

Auditory and visual senses can improve memory retention and make proofreading assignments easier. Best of all, this tool is entirely free to use. IR is also available in the [Edge browser](#). Check out [AHEAD AT Hive - Demo Immersive Reader in Action](#). Discover more about [IR on Use Immersive Reader in Word by Microsoft](#).

Download [Immersive Reader Quick Guide.pdf](#)

Download [Digital Tools for Dyslexia.pdf](#)

Read Aloud



It highlights each word as it reads your document to you. Use Read Aloud to hear your document narrated to you or to support your understanding when reading any Word document.

Step 1

Open a Microsoft Office Word document

Step 2

Click or tap where you would like Read Aloud to begin playing **OR**

Place your cursor at the beginning of the document to read the whole document aloud.

Step 3

Select Review

Step 4

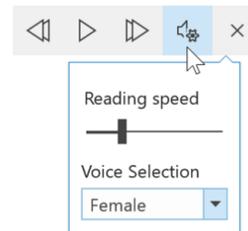
Select Aloud

You can adjust what the document sounds like.



Select the **Settings** icon, then:

Drag the **Reading speed** control to adjust the reading speed.



- Move to the right to increase speed and to the left to decrease it.
- Press Play to hear the different speeds.

Use the **Voice Selection** dropdown menu to choose different voices for the reader. Select a voice and then press **Play** to hear it.

Select **X** to close **Read Aloud**.

Note: Read Aloud can be used on its own or within Immersive Reader for Word on Windows (and MacOS).

For more information here is a link from Microsoft Support: [Listen to your Word documents with Read Aloud](#) and [Listen to your Outlook email messages](#)

Speak



To use Speak:

Step 1

Open a Microsoft Office Word document

Step 2

Select a word or block of text in your document

Step 3

In the Quick Access Toolbar, select the Speak selected text icon.



See the help article for instructions about adding the Speak icon to your Quick Access Toolbar. Here is a link from Microsoft Support: [use the Speak text-to-speech feature to read text aloud](#). After you have added the Speak command to your Quick Access Toolbar, you can hear single words or blocks of text read aloud by selecting the text you want to hear and then clicking the Speak icon on the Quick Access Toolbar.

Narrator

If you are blind or have low vision, the Narrator lets you use your PC without a mouse to complete common tasks. It reads and interacts with things on the screen, like text and buttons. You can use Narrator to read and write emails, browse the Internet, and work with documents.

Natural Reader 16



Natural Reader 16 is screen reader software that offers free (with limited features) and paid subscription options. It uses text-to-speech technology to read text aloud. The software is accessible as a web version and a Chrome browser extension, both of which require an internet connection.

Natural Reader enhances readability for individuals with dyslexia, ADHD, and other reading-related learning variances.

- Listen to PDFs, webpages, Google docs, ebooks, images or scanned files of text and other files read out.
- As it is reading, the text on the webpage is highlighted so students can easily follow.
- Students can create audio MP3 files to listen to on their favourite devices (this is an additional feature with a paid subscription).
- Automatic text detection means it retrieves only relevant text from webpages, avoiding advertisements and menu text.
- Free Voices are available for all users. Premium Voices are available to free users for up to 20 minutes/day.

For more information, view the [Natural Reader Introduction video](#) or Download/Purchase - [Natural Reader Online](#), [Natural Reader Chrome browser extension](#), [Natural Reader for Windows](#), [Natural Reader online paid subscription](#), and [Natural Reader for laptop paid version](#).

Cost: It's free (limited features, but worth a try!). Additional features are available with a paid subscription starting at \$9.99/month.

Bookshare Ireland



Bookshare Ireland is the most extensively accessible digital library in Ireland. It is free through the National Council for the Blind (NCBI) for individuals with a print disability, including dyslexia. Students can access Bookshare using their desktop computer/ laptop by registering online at <https://bookshare.ie>. Go to the bottom of the page and choose "sign up." Students will receive a reply email with login details once their registration request is approved. Students do not need to be registered with NCBI, but BookShare operates under a copyright exemption; you must confirm a print disability by a qualified Psychologist / professional or documentation from the Academic Resource Office (ARO). Installing an App called [Dolphin Easy Reader](#) from [Google Play](#), [iOS](#) and or [Windows](#) will provide access to Bookshare on a tablet or smartphone.

Microsoft Lens (formerly Microsoft Office Lens)



Microsoft Lens is a free scanning app. It works on iPad, iPhone, Android, and Windows devices. Students can capture and crop a picture of a whiteboard, blackboard, or text. They can read the scanned text aloud using the features within the Microsoft Lends Reader Tool (which uses Optical Character Recognition (OCR)) to manipulate the text or words to suit their learning needs. Learners can choose to convert images to Word (.docx), PowerPoint (.pptx) or PDF (.pdf) files and save them to OneDrive or their local device. See how to use [Office Lens](#) on a mobile device iOS or Android.

Acrobat Reader DC free PDF viewer



Acrobat Reader DC is a free PDF viewer. Adobe Reader can be downloaded [here](#). Please do not check the box for a McAfee security scan or anything else (our IT Department has advised against those). The link will download the free version, though it has ads for premium features.

How to have a PDF file read out loud within Acrobat Reader DC Adobe Reader read aloud feature will enable you to have your files read aloud. To find out how to listen to PDF files being read aloud visit [Conveniently hear PDF files read aloud](#).

Reflow Text in a PDF

Reflow a PDF to temporarily present it as a single column that is the width of the document pane. This reflow view makes the document easier to read.

- To reflow text, choose **View > Zoom > Reflow**.

In the reflow view, only readable text is usually displayed. Text that doesn't reflow includes forms, comments, digital signature fields, and page elements like page numbers, headers, and footers. Pages containing both readable text and form or digital signature fields won't reflow. Vertical text will reflow horizontally.

LookOut - Android



LookOut is an Assisted Vision FREE App on Google Play for Android (is Android's answer to Apple's Seeing AI (Artificial Intelligence)). Lookout uses computer vision to assist

people with low vision or blindness in identifying objects and text using the camera and sensors on their Android devices. It can recognise and speak text and identify currency notes, making everyday tasks like sorting mail and putting away groceries faster and easier.

The following [YouTube video from Vision Forward](#) will lead you through the primary functions of the Lookout AI app.

Seeing AI is for iPhone



Seeing AI is a free app that narrates the world around you. It was designed with and for the blind and low-vision community.

- Seeing AI provides tools to assist with a variety of daily tasks, for example:
- Short Text - Speaks text as soon as it appears in front of the camera.
- Documents - Provides audio guidance to capture a printed page and recognises the text, along with its original formatting.
- Products - Scans barcodes, using audio beeps to guide you; hear the name and package information when available.
- People—Saves people's faces so you can recognise them and estimate their age, gender, and expression.
- Currency - Recognises currency notes.

The above is not a conclusive list of Seeing AI features, but it continues to evolve. Explore [a tutorial on Seeking AI on their YouTube playlist](#).

Howjsay – Improve your English pronunciation with Howjsay

howjsay [Howjsay](#) is a free online talking dictionary of English pronunciation. It is very useful for learning new words. It also provides definitions and translates words into different languages.

Dictionary.com

[Dictionary.com](#) is the primary online source for definitions, word origins, and more. It provides the Word of the Day and explores the stories behind current slang, unlocking the secrets of the English language for millions of people. The platform strives to enable and inspire connection, communication, learning, creativity, and expression in a world powered by words.

Reading support resources

The nature of paper-based books with black text on a white background can be challenging to readers who experience visual stress or scotopic light sensitivity. Learners can experience text moving or floating on the page or letters appearing back to front.

Some reading tools are "low-tech." This is especially true of the following reading tools, which you will find in most stationary stores. Coloured overlays or colour transparencies can be placed over a page to soften the contrast of black text on a white background. Sticky highlighter strips can also aid the reading process, as important words, sentences, or phrases can be annotated in different colours.

- Try using a [coloured overlay or a coloured reading ruler](#).
- Try using [sticky text highlighter strips](#) (to highlight important points and revise).
- Use a writing/reading slope or a book stand to position the book.

Tips for reading success for learners

In addition to using AT to assist reading, it is critical to use metacognitive strategies when reading, such as thinking about how you are reading and using a strategy before, during, and after reading to capture the meaning gained from the text.

The following methods, based on the SQ4R method, may be helpful.

First view [How to Use the SQ4R Reading Technique](#) Video Source: Academic Success, Algonquin College.

Then read the SQ4R Reading Technique:

- **Survey:** Before reading a book, chapter or text, look at the heading, subheadings, and key terms and read the final paragraph. Then, examine and describe any pictures, diagrams, charts or maps accompanying the text. These steps will help you predict the text's content and main points.
- **Question:** Ask yourself what the heading, subheading, and pictures tell you about the text. Turn headings into questions to guide your reading. What is it about? Who are the principal characters? What are the main events? When? Where? Why? and so on. Keep track of your questions by using the [Cornell Method](#) of note-taking.
- **Read:** Then read through the text once for fluency, using tools like Immersive Reader or Natural Reader if needed. Re-read the text, looking for the answers to the questions you posed. Note answers using the Cornell Method of note-taking method.
- **Reflect:** Think about what you have read and relate it to other information you have learned.
- **Recite:** Without looking at the text, rephrase the questions and form an answer in your own words. Consider explaining your understanding of the text to a peer, a family member, or a teddy to reinforce your knowledge of the topic.
- **Review:** When you have completed reading, review your notes and familiarise yourself with key points.

Technology for Writing

Speech-to-Text / Dictate in Microsoft 365



Speech-to-text technology, also known as dictation or voice recognition, converts spoken language into written text. It allows learners to speak naturally; the software or dictate feature interprets their thoughts and transcribes them into text on their screen. It is good to know Dictate is accessible to all students in Word Online in Microsoft 365.

Dictate in Microsoft 365 Word online - Typing is one way to write in a Word document, but the dictate feature can also type your voice. For People who may have slow typing speed, issues with spelling dictate is an alternative way to approach essay writing. Select the 'Dictate' option in Word online and speak your thoughts to have them typed. Explore how to switch on the [Dictation Tool in Microsoft 365 Word online](#) from the AT Hive hub hosted by AHEAD.

Gaining confidence in using speech-to-text technology can take time.

Here are some tips to consider when dictating your thoughts:

- Start using speech-to-text on topics you are familiar with or comfortable discussing. This can reduce the pressure and make the process feel more natural.
- Practice regularly: like any skill, practice is essential. The more you use speech-to-text, the more confident you will become. Try dictating notes, emails, or text messages regularly.
- Speak at a steady pace and in complete sentences. Avoid speaking too fast or slow, which can affect recognition accuracy.

Here is a guide for writing using dictate / speech recognition:

- **Think It** - Think about what you want to say.
- **Say It** - Talk out loud. Some students prefer not to look at the screen as they dictate.
- **Check It** - Check the text for errors.
- **Fix It** - You can combine typing and dictation to fix errors.
- Do not hesitate to make corrections if the system misinterprets your words.
- Use punctuation and formatting commands: Learn how to use voice commands for punctuation (for example, 'comma', 'full-stop', and 'question mark') and formatting (for example, 'new paragraph', 'new line'). This can help make your transcriptions more accurate and readable.
- Use a quiet environment: minimise background noise when using speech-to-text to ensure the system can capture your voice accurately.
- Learn the specific commands and features: familiarise yourself with the speech-to-text application or software you use. Many platforms have specific voice commands and features that can enhance your experience.
- Gradually increase complexity: as you gain confidence, start dictating longer and more complex pieces of text. This will challenge your skills and help you improve.
- Review and edit: review the text for errors and make necessary edits after transcribing.
- **Be patient and persistent.** Adjusting and improving your skills takes time, like any new technology. Stay patient and persistent, and you will notice progress over time.

Boost your dictating skill with video and text resources for Dictate in Word

- View a quick overview '[Learn more about using Dictate with Word online](#)' from Dyslexia Ireland.
- How to use [Dictation in Microsoft Word for the Web](#) with Microsoft 365's video.
- Quick guide resource to [Dictate in Microsoft 365, Dictate in Windows 10 and Windows Speech Recognition](#) from Call Scotland
- [AT Masterclass - Microsoft Editor - Spelling & Grammar checker & Dictate - Voice Recognition](#) from Trinity College disAbility
- Use a voice recording app to capture your thoughts on assignments while on the move and transcribe them later.
- Select a reliable recording app. For example, you can use Voice Memos (free) on iOS, Google Recorder on Android, or any other third-party app like Otter from Otter.ai.
- Do a quick test recording to familiarise yourself with the app's features and ensure it works correctly.
- Launch the recording app on your phone and set any necessary preferences, such as file format.
- Press the record button to capture your voice.
- Have the phone close to you to ensure it is recording your voice and to reduce background noise.
- If the app supports it, use the pause button for breaks during the speech.
- Press the stop button when you are finished.

Post - Recording

- Save the recording with a descriptive name for easy identification
- Upload the file to a cloud service, for example, iCloud or Google Drive, or transfer it to your computer for safekeeping.

Transcription

- Play back the recording and type up the speech manually.
- Please carefully review and edit the transcribed text to ensure it is accurate and complete.

Additional Tips

- Transcribing can be time-consuming, so take breaks to avoid fatigue
- If the recording app allows, add timestamps during recording to quickly find key sections later.

Following the steps above, you can efficiently use your phone's recording app to capture speech and convert it into text for your assignments.

Spelling and grammar in Word



Word in Microsoft 365 can help improve your documents by checking and highlighting spelling and grammar errors and will prompt you to review and make necessary corrections. Additionally, it may suggest ways to improve the clarity of your writing by using more concise language. View the following Microsoft Support video on [Spelling and grammar in Word](#).

Microsoft Editor



Microsoft Editor uses Artificial Intelligence (AI) to recognize and offer corrections for spelling and grammar mistakes in Office 365, (available via Carlow College Office 365), for example, Word, Outlook and Word Online. The key features of Microsoft Editor are Spelling checker, Grammar checker and refinements such as clarity, conciseness, and punctuation.

For more information about Editor in Word for Microsoft 365, see [Check grammar, spelling, and more in Word](#).

The Microsoft Editor free browser extensions can be downloaded [for Edge](#) and [for Chrome](#). It is free to use for spelling and grammar on a range of web applications such as Gmail and social media.

LightKey



Lightkey's AI-Powered spelling correction technology works for users by learning from their typing habits and offering spelling corrections based on their unique vocabulary.

[This LightKey video](#) gives an overview of LightKey, a free AI-powered text prediction software for Windows. [How to type faster using Lightkey's AI-Powered writing assistant for Windows](#) will show 5 different ways to speed up your typing and be more productive using Lightkey's text prediction software for Windows.

1. Personalised Predictions
2. Real-time Corrections.
3. Smart Greetings in Outlook.
4. Punctuation and Math Expressions.
5. Sound Assistance.

A free version of [LightKey](#) is available for download and is limited to 1000 keystrokes per month. You can upgrade to the full version by visiting their [website](#) for unlimited use. They have useful guides and tutorials on their website, which you can access [here](#).

Glean – a note-taking tool.



Glean

Glean - a notetaking tool (subscription-based). Notetaking can be challenging for autistic students as they struggle to switch between tasks and have difficulty deciding where to direct attention. This may lead to a high cognitive overload and the risk of not processing essential information during a lecture. Glean will enable a student to focus on processing the information for understanding and remove the need to listen and write simultaneously.

Glean enables students to use their laptop or mobile device to use Glean's key features to personalise their lecture notes, seminars and other study sessions delivered on campus and remotely over the internet. Glean is a subscription-based tool for students registered with ARO (Academic Resource Office) who have been granted this support at their Needs Assessment.

[Watch this 3-minute explainer video to see how Glean can help you take better notes.](#)

Try using one or two Digital Assistive Technologies every semester to enhance your academic potential. Do not overwhelm yourself with too many features at once, but the benefits of engaging with assistive technology are worth the time and effort.