Developmental Coordination Disorder - Dyspraxia
Information for parents

Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD) is a marked impairment in the development of motor skills and coordination that would be expected for a child’s age or level of intelligence.

This has a significant impact on the child’s daily living activities, such as their self-care skills and their school life.

In order to be given a diagnosis of DCD, other underlying medical reasons for the difficulties must be ruled out.

What is the difference between DCD and Dyspraxia?

Not all people with DCD have Dyspraxia. Dyspraxia is a type of DCD which highlights specific difficulties with motor skills, movement and coordination.

Dyspraxia is an impairment or immaturity of the organisation of movement and, in many people, there may be associated problems with language, perception and thought.

What might my child find difficult?

Here are some things your child may have difficulty with:

- Handwriting – problems with both speed and style
- Physical activities – especially those that involve throwing, catching and balancing
- Organisational skills – these may be poorly developed and they may forget things easily
- Copying from a whiteboard
- Using scissors or cutlery
- Tying shoelaces
- Navigating around school when lessons are in different places
- Sequencing tasks and being organised
- New tasks they haven’t tried before
- Sitting still
- Sitting up straight, especially if on the floor, which may lead to slouching.

Why might my child find these things difficult?

Sequencing task and being organised may be difficult due to a poor short term memory, meaning that tasks involving more than one or two steps can be tough for them.

Handwriting might be difficult due to low muscle tone, instability in joints, the way they hold their pencil, and their hands getting tired quickly.

They may also find it hard to organise new ideas, formulate latters and remember grammar and punctuation.
What does this mean for my child?

It may take your child longer to learn new things and they may need to go over them lots of times in order for them to learn them.

It also means that your child may need extra support from you to be organised and remember important things.

Will my child improve?

Improvements can be made in some areas, typically in physical coordination.

These can be achieved with access to the right therapy to help your child develop skills. The improvement to skills will be different for every child.

You can get support to help your child with:

- Postural exercises;
- Strengthening exercises;
- Strategies to make activities easier, such as repetition. This is a really good way to improve something your child is struggling with.

What will happen when my child is older?

When your child is older they will need continued support from people around them. They may continue to find tasks that require sequencing difficult; they may struggle to problem solve and to organise their daily activities.

They will need to continue to use the strategies they have found that work best for them.

How can I help?

- Use labels on drawers to help with organisation
- Use a calendar/checklist to help your child remember to do certain things
- Have set routines for mealtimes, bedtime etc.
- Provide your child with special cutlery which helps them to hold their cutlery properly and enables them to have more control in cutting up their food
- Use a star chart (depending on your child’s age)
- Buy easy-fitting clothing – elasticated waist instead of buttons or a zip
- Buy a transparent pencil case to make it easier for your child to see the contents
- If possible, allow them to do some of their homework on a computer and print it off to send in to school.
- Communicate with their school and share what works
- Give lots of praise, don’t criticise

How can my child’s school help?

- Make sure your child doesn’t have to copy off the whiteboard
- Provide extra time for your child during activities/exams
- Break down activities into smaller parts in order for your child to remember what they need to do.
- Provide a timetable to ensure your child knows what lesson is next, and any other things that may be happening.
- Provide access to IT
Who else can help?

**Occupational Therapist** - They can help with strategies for daily life and provide exercises to help motor skills.

**Physiotherapist** - They can help with muscle control and posture.

**Community** - Contact your local sports centres for activities your child may like to take part in.

**Online resources** - [www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk](http://www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk) provides many strategies which may help your child.

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If you require this publication in a different format or language, please contact the Trust’s Equality and Diversity Team on 024 7653 6802.

**Acknowledgement:** [www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk](http://www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk) and [www.canchld.ca](http://www.canchld.ca)