

BDA Diagnostic Assessments for Dyslexia Children and Under-16s

The BDA offers diagnostic assessment for dyslexia for individuals of all ages; both children and adults.

This document provides information on the assessment process which aims to answer some of the more frequently asked questions and help you to decide if a diagnostic assessment is needed.

What is a diagnostic assessment?

A diagnostic assessment is intended to confirm whether an individual has dyslexia or not. It provides a confirmed diagnosis of dyslexia, as well as a clearer picture of the young person's strengths and weaknesses and their individual cognitive profile.

In some cases, other Specific Learning Difficulties can be identified but not all assessors will carry out these assessments so this may limit the availability of an assessor. This needs to be clearly identified on your booking form to help us to match you to the most appropriate assessor.

Why do people have diagnostic assessments?

A diagnostic assessment may be beneficial where a child or young person is experiencing significant difficulties in their study or in day-to-day life and who does not already have a diagnosis of dyslexia or another specific learning difficulty (SpLD).

A diagnostic assessment may be requested because:

- A young person, their parent/carer or another professional recognises that the young person is better at some skills than others and would like to know why.
- A young person, their parent/carer or another professional would like to understand why the young person finds aspects of learning, particularly reading, writing and or spelling difficult.
- If this assessment is required to potentially be used as part of an application for exam access arrangements, under JCQ regulations, then you must discuss this with the individual's school or college prior to the assessment. This is so that the school/college can complete Part A of the Form 8 (application for exam access arrangements) which

supplies information about the individual's normal way of working within this environment. This will ensure that any recommendations for support in exams reflect this. Assessors cannot provide or complete a form 8 without Part A being completed in advance.

- A young person, their parent/carer or another professional recognises that the young person finds aspects of remembering and organisation particularly difficult.
- They have previously had an assessment and/or extra help at school and would like a fuller or updated assessment in order to have a better understanding of their difficulties.
- Parents would like to understand their child's difficulties and know how best to help them at home.
- Schools or other professionals have suggested that families contact the BDA for an assessment.

How quickly can I get an assessment?

We can usually arrange assessments within four weeks of receiving a completed booking form, dependant on demand and whether we have assessors based in that area. Assessment reports can take up to 15 working days after the assessment to arrive.

For assessments that are going to be used to apply for exam access arrangements we would recommend that these are booked at the start of the programme of study as applications for access arrangements have to be submitted to the examinations body well before the exams start.

How long does an assessment take?

A diagnostic assessment will usually take up to three hours to complete, depending on the circumstances.

The assessor will usually chat with the parents before the assessment, then carry out the assessment and chat briefly with the parents after the assessment, although at this stage they will not be able to provide any feedback about the results or diagnosis.

What happens during an assessment?

Please ensure that you know where the assessment is taking place, particularly if the assessment is at the assessor's premises. Please try to ensure that you arrive on time as the assessor may have other assessments booked that day.

BDA diagnostic assessments take place in a private room at the location where the assessment has been booked (e.g.: at the young person's home, at the assessors' office, etc.). If taking place at the child's home then a quiet room is required where the assessor and child will not be disturbed.

During the assessment if at the child's home please try and minimise any potential disturbances or interruptions. A flat writing surface/table will be required.

All BDA assessors are fully checked, qualified and have DBS clearance. You may wish to stay with the young person whilst they are being assessed but this is at the discretion of the assessor as sometimes parents/carers are a distraction for the young person and it can influence their behaviour or performance.

If the assessment is taking place at the assessor's premises then parents/carers may like to find/bring something to keep themselves occupied, keep in mind this could be up to about 3 hours.

Given the length of the assessment it may be helpful to provide the young person with a drink and a snack, if the assessor notices that the young person is getting tired they will facilitate appropriate breaks.

Please leave the assessor with an emergency mobile number if you are leaving the young person during the assessment should they need to contact you (this is highly unlikely).

It may be helpful to bring a few samples of the child's work and/or school reports but otherwise all equipment will be provided.

The aim of the assessment aim is:

- To assess performance on a range of items, allowing the assessor to consider strengths and weaknesses. This isn't an exam so there is no "pass" or "fail" - the intention is to help highlight the young person's individual style of learning or working and what does/doesn't work for them.
- To collect information about reading, spelling and writing skills.
- To identify whether there is a clear discrepancy between general level of ability and reading and writing attainment.
- To consider other factors which may be affecting learning.
- To identify whether any reasonable adjustments will need to be made in order for a young person to fully access the curriculum and its assessment.

Up-to-date tests are used which explore aspects of underlying ability, reading, writing and spelling, handwriting and fine motor skills, underlying learning skills such as phonological awareness, speed of processing and memory, speech and language and auditory processing.

Please note that the assessor will not be able to provide any diagnostic feedback immediately

after the assessment as they will need to calculate the scores that are generated by the tests and analyse the overall profile of performance.

What happens after an assessment?

The diagnostic assessment will be followed by a written report. This report will provide evidence of the individual's dyslexic profile (if the individual has been confirmed as having dyslexia), signposting to other organisations or further assessments for specific learning difficulties (if required), and will include some recommendations about how to support the individual in the context of their study and/or day-to-day life.

The assessment report will be sent to the young person's parent or carer, usually by email, within around 15 working days of the completed assessment.

We aim for the report to be a document that the individual is happy to share with family, teachers, tutors and other professionals if they wish, as this will give information on how they can help to provide support. A copy of the assessment report will be held at the BDA according to Data Protection principles.

We would recommend that you share the report with the child's school and arrange a meeting with the SENCO to discuss the final report once you have received it.

The BDA quality assures its diagnostic assessment reports in line with guidelines set by the SpLD Assessment Standards Committee (SASC).

After receiving the report you may like to speak to someone to discuss its findings so that you can develop a greater understanding of the results. The BDA can offer a telephone consultation with a dyslexia expert but there may be an additional charge for this.

Can assessors diagnose any other conditions?

Some of our assessors are also able to diagnose some closely associated conditions such as dyspraxia and dyscalculia, although different tests are needed for these. If the diagnostic assessment that has been booked is for dyslexia, then the assessor may not have the right resources with them to do this on the day. A pre-assessment questionnaire, which must be returned to us before the assessment takes place, should alert the assessor to any co-occurring difficulties which may be present. Please make sure you note this clearly on the questionnaire. Also, in some cases this may limit the availability of assessors.

A good assessor will always refer the individual on for further testing if they feel that there are indicators of conditions other than dyslexia.

Assessors are **not** able to diagnose learning difficulties such as autism or ADHD, as these are medical rather than educational difficulties and so require a different type of assessment.

Can I be assessed if English isn't my first language?

To be assessed you will need to have lived in an English-speaking country and to have been regularly speaking English for a minimum of seven years. This is because the tests used are heavily influenced by an English-speaking culture. In addition, you need to be able to read, write and spell in English. If an assessment is carried out before then the assessor can't make a definitive diagnosis which would mean a re-test may be needed at a later date.

How should you prepare for a diagnostic assessment?

- It is important for children to know that they are coming to see someone who is interested in how people learn. They will help to work out why some learning is difficult and what might help to make things easier.
- Parents and adults may like to look at the British Dyslexia Association website for some background information: <http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/>
- It is a requirement that the child has had a sight test within the last six months, prior to the assessment.
- It is helpful, if this has not been recently done, to arrange an up to date check of hearing
- The child's parents and school will be asked to complete pre-assessment questionnaires to gain background information in order to enable assessors to plan appropriate assessment activities. These documents must be returned with the booking forms.
- Children can bring examples of school work and reports with them. We also sometimes ask them to bring a current reading book and short piece of totally independent writing. There are separate instructions for older students.
- It is important that assessors have information about any previous assessments and / or study support. It is important for them to see relevant past specialist reports to avoid repetition of tests within too short a time, which may make results invalid.

Who are our assessors?

We have a team of experienced diagnostic assessors who work with the BDA; some are Specialist Teachers who have also trained to become diagnostic assessors (are AMBDA qualified), and others are Educational Psychologists.

All of our assessors must have prior experience in assessing and teaching/working with individuals



who have dyslexia and associated specific learning difficulties. In addition, they are required to hold a current Assessment Practising Certificate (APC) if they are a Specialist Teacher and assessor, or to be registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) if they are an Educational Psychologist, they all have DBS clearance.

What is the difference between an assessment with an Educational Psychologist and an assessment with a Specialist Teacher?

Both Specialist Teachers (who are AMBDA qualified) and Educational Psychologists are able to accurately assess for dyslexia; there is very little difference between the two.

Educational Psychologists have access to a different type of cognitive ability test that Specialist Teachers are not able to use, which has a slightly higher number of “sub-tests”.

Both Specialist Teachers and Educational Psychologists can make recommendations about how the individual can best be supported. It may be that a Specialist teacher has a better understanding of the classroom environment and so can make more specific recommendations, but this does depend on the background and experience of each individual assessor.

There may be some instances where an Educational Psychologist needs to be used instead of a Specialist Teacher, but these are often specified at the time of the assessment being requested.

Where are we based?

The BDA can carry out diagnostic assessments in most areas of England, however there are some restrictions on this and availability will change depending on how busy our assessors are. It is important that you indicate your preferred location on the form in the booking pack. Our assessors are usually happy to travel up to a radius of 40 miles from the locations listed or you may prefer/need to travel to them.

Alternatively, if an assessor is not available within the area required, the BDA may be able to arrange a diagnostic assessment to take place in London, at our Headquarters in Bracknell, or at a mutually convenient location if you are prepared to travel to this location.

How much does it cost?

Assessment with a specialist teacher: £450.00 + VAT

Assessment with an Educational Psychologist: £600.00 + VAT

The Assessment Booking Process:

- 1 • Download an Assessment Booking Pack.
- 2 • Complete the assessment booking form (Please indicate preference for a Specialist Teacher or Psychologist assessment).
- 3 • Complete the Assessor/Psychologist Locations form.
- 4 • Complete Pre-Assessment Questionnaires (Parent and School).
- 5 • Identify any dates that you are not available.
- 6 • Complete payment details. **Please note we cannot book assessments without all of the necessary documents being received.**
- 7 • Email all completed forms together to: assessments@bdadyslexia.org.uk
- 8 • Payment will be taken. **Please note bookings will not be confirmed without payment.**
- 9 • You will receive confirmation of your appointment by email.
- 10 • Attend your appointment.
- 11 • You will receive your report approx. 15 working days after your assessment.
- 12 • Post-assessment: If you require a post assessment consultation then please contact us to arrange this. These are usually done by telephone and may incur a charge.