

# Help Your Child with Dyslexia: Tips and Tools

*4-Week Work Plan (Facilitator Guide for Teachers)*

## Course Overview

- Purpose: A practical parent support course to reduce homework stress and build confidence at home.
- Tone: Support, not perfection. Create a non-judgmental, welcoming space.
- Scope: Strategy-based supports for home. This is not a diagnostic pathway and not a replacement for school-based supports.

## Core Teaching Principles (Repeat Each Week)

- Confidence first: Build confidence before offering corrections.
- Regulation first: Support calm and focus before learning.
- Start small: Trial one strategy or tool at a time.
- Keep it short, consistent, positive, and celebrate progress.

## Recommended Delivery Format

- Session length: 60–90 minutes (timings are flexible).
- Group: Parents/guardians (primary and/or post-primary).
- Structure each week: Welcome → Check-in → Short input → Practical demo/try-it → Reflection → Choose one home action.

## Preparation Checklist (All Weeks)

- Room setup: Circle or small groups; allow space for movement activities in Week 4.
- Materials: Print short texts/templates when required; bring demo tools or show photos if physical items are unavailable.
- Accessibility: Encourage parents to bring phones/tablets for Week 2.
- Safeguarding: Remind the group not to share identifying information about children in public discussion.

## Week 1 — Understanding Dyslexia & Creating Calm Homework Routines

### Theme

Understanding dyslexia, taking a strengths-based view, and introducing simple regulation tools and small home changes to improve homework time.

### Learning Outcomes

- Parents understand dyslexia as a difference in processing written language (not linked to intelligence).
- Parents recognise common areas of difficulty (reading, spelling, memory, sequencing) and that children present differently.
- Parents can name strengths often seen with dyslexia (creative thinking, big-picture view, problem-solving, storytelling).
- Parents trial at least one regulation/sensory support and choose one tool to try at home.

### Materials to Prepare

- A small selection of fidgets/sensory tools (or a few examples to pass around).
- Examples of: coloured reading ruler/overlay, erasable pen, mini whiteboard (or photos if not available).

### Session Plan (60–75 mins)

1. Welcome and tone-setting (5–8 mins): Emphasise support, not perfection; set a safe, non-judgmental atmosphere; clarify what the course is and is not.
2. Discussion starter (8–10 mins): “If you had one word to describe homework time at home, what would it be?” Validate common feelings and normalise parent experience.
3. Mini input: What is dyslexia? (10 mins): Explain dyslexia as a different way of processing written language; highlight common impacts and variability.
4. Strengths-based reframe (5–7 mins): Discuss common strengths and invite parents to share one strength they see in their child.
5. Why sensory tools help (8–10 mins): Explain how movement and sensory input can support regulation and focus; relate to reducing anxiety.
6. Try-it activity (5–7 mins): Parents use a fidget while listening; reflect: does it distract or help focus?
7. Tool demo (8–10 mins): Show how to use a coloured reading ruler/overlay, erasable pen, and mini whiteboard for low-pressure practice.
8. Close and home action (3–5 mins): Parents choose one tool/strategy to try this week; remind them to observe impact and prioritise connection over correction.

### Parent Home Plan (Week 1)

- Choose one tool (e.g., reading ruler/overlay, mini whiteboard, erasable pen, or a regulation tool).
- Use for 10 minutes maximum during one homework session.

- Notice and jot down: What changed (mood, time taken, resistance, confidence)?

## Week 2 — Dyslexia & Assistive Technology (AT)

### Theme

Practical assistive technology tools that remove barriers and build independence at home for reading, writing, organisation, memory, and study.

### Learning Outcomes

- Parents can explain what assistive technology is and how it supports independence.
- Parents identify AT categories: reading support (text-to-speech), writing support (speech-to-text and predictive text/spell support), organisation and recording/memory tools, and study supports.
- Parents try at least one reading tool and one writing tool during the session.
- Parents choose one manageable tool to trial at home (“start small”).

### Materials to Prepare

- Encourage parents to bring a phone/tablet/laptop.
- Optional: a short sample text (printed or digital) for testing text-to-speech and dictation.
- Optional handout: a simple list of suggested tools under headings (Reading, Writing, Organisation, Recording, Study).

### Session Plan (75–90 mins)

9. Welcome and check-in (5–8 mins): Quick share from Week 1—what did parents try and what changed?
10. What is assistive technology? (8–10 mins): Define AT as tools that remove barriers; emphasise it does not replace learning but supports access and independence.
11. Why AT helps (5–7 mins): Discuss reduced frustration/fatigue, increased confidence, and support for working memory.
12. Reading support: Text-to-Speech (10 mins): Explain how TTS supports comprehension and reduces reading load; show one tool if possible.
13. Immersive reading features (8–10 mins): Demonstrate spacing/background/line focus and read-aloud where available.
14. Practice break (10 mins): Parents explore a TTS option on their own device using a sample text.
15. Writing support: Speech-to-Text + predictive text (12–15 mins): Demonstrate dictation and discuss how it reduces spelling anxiety; show spell/predictive support.
16. Organisation + recording/memory supports (8–10 mins): Demonstrate a simple to-do list/reminder method; discuss taking photos of homework boards and recording instructions.
17. Study/secondary supports (8–10 mins): Discuss audiobooks and curriculum access; for older students, discuss using AI tools appropriately as a study support (brainstorming, simplifying text, revision questions).

18. Barriers and problem-solving (8–10 mins): Discuss common obstacles (confidence, child resistance, overwhelm, inconsistent rules) and how to start small.
19. Explore device accessibility settings (5 mins): Guide parents to find spoken content/dictation/accessibility options on their device.
20. Close and home action (3–5 mins): Each parent chooses one tool to trial this week.

### **Parent Home Plan (Week 2)**

- Choose one assistive tool (TTS, dictation, immersive reading display, audiobook, or an organisation/reminder tool).
- Trial it in one real homework situation and notice: Did it reduce fatigue or frustration? Did it increase independence?

## Week 3 — Reading, Writing & Memory Skills (Confidence at Home)

### Theme

Low-pressure reading strategies, supportive writing scaffolds, oral storytelling, and practical memory supports building confidence at home.

### Learning Outcomes

- Parents learn and practice low-pressure reading strategies (paired reading, echo reading, audiobooks, highlighting, picture walk).
- Parents learn writing supports (talk first, sentence building, word banks, speech-to-text).
- Parents understand memory challenges and can apply home supports (checklists, routines, consistency, short practice bursts, praise effort).
- Parents choose one activity to try this week that feels manageable.

### Materials to Prepare

- A picture book for a “picture walk” demonstration.
- A search-and-find/vocabulary activity (book or printed page sample).
- Magnetic picture prompts or printed cut-outs for sentence building (optional).
- Story cubes or story prompt cards.
- A short text excerpt for memory activity (plus clear group instructions).

### Session Plan (75–90 mins)

21. Welcome and check-in (5–8 mins): Share one success or one challenge from last week’s tool trial.
22. Why these skills matter (5 mins): Briefly explain the value of reading, writing, storytelling, and memory for school and wellbeing.
23. Reading without pressure (12–15 mins): Teach and model paired reading, echo reading, audiobooks with text, highlighting key words, and picture walk; focus on fluency over perfection.
24. How to do a picture walk (8–10 mins): Look at cover/title, flip pages without reading, predict events, discuss feelings, and predict what happens next.
25. Try-it practice (8–10 mins): Parents practice picture walk in pairs with a book/image prompt.
26. Calm literacy activity (5–7 mins): Demonstrate search-and-find/vocabulary activities and discuss how they support attention and vocabulary.
27. Writing tips and scaffolds (10–12 mins): Talk first, dictate ideas, build sentences gradually, and use word banks.
28. Try-it: sentence/story building (8–10 mins): Use magnetic pictures or cut-outs to build a simple sentence and then reorder for beginning/middle/end.
29. Oral storytelling (8–10 mins): Use story cubes to create a short oral story (character, setting, problem, solution). Discuss how this can reduce writing frustration.
30. Record the story (3–5 mins): Model using a voice note to capture the story first; explain how it validates ideas before spelling becomes a barrier.

31. Understanding memory challenges (8–10 mins): Discuss working memory and multi-step instructions; teach supports (checklists, routines, consistency, short bursts, praise effort).
32. Try-it: memory activity (10 mins): Group activity with one reader and listeners; reflect on stress and memory load.
33. Close (3–5 mins): Parents choose one activity to try this week; remind them to keep it short, consistent, and positive.

### **Parent Home Plan (Week 3)**

- Choose one: (a) Picture walk twice this week (5–10 mins), (b) Story cubes oral story + record (5 mins), or (c) Create one checklist routine (morning bag/homework steps).
- Keep sessions short and end on success.

## Week 4 — Dyslexia & Dyscalculia + Bringing It All Together

### Theme

A relaxed recap, introduction to dyscalculia, practical maths-in-the-home ideas, the “Praise Sandwich” for homework feedback, movement and rhythm activities, and course feedback.

### Learning Outcomes

- Parents recap key messages about dyslexia and the tools/activities used across the course.
- Parents understand dyscalculia as difficulty with numbers, time, and sequencing (not laziness or low ability).
- Parents identify common signs of dyscalculia and how it may impact children and teenagers.
- Parents learn home strategies: real-life maths, remove time pressure, talk steps aloud, and use visuals and hands-on materials.
- Parents practice the Praise Sandwich method to support confidence while correcting gently.
- Parents practice crossing-the-midline and rhythm activities to support sequencing and memory.

### Materials to Prepare

- Short sample text for Praise Sandwich practice (one per pair/group).
- Space for movement (crossing the midline).
- Optional: household objects for hands-on maths examples (coins, pasta, Lego).
- Feedback prompts on a slide or printout.

### Session Plan (75–90 mins)

34. Welcome and agenda (5 mins): Set a “no stress tonight” tone; outline recap, dyscalculia, maths-at-home ideas, Praise Sandwich, movement activities, and feedback.
35. Recap dyslexia (8–10 mins): Revisit key messages and normalise that progress is gradual; invite a quick share: one helpful change at home.
36. Recap course tools (5–7 mins): Review assistive tech ideas, reading together, audiobooks, and oral storytelling.
37. What is dyscalculia? (10 mins): Explain dyscalculia as difficulties with numbers, time, and sequencing; discuss that it is not caused by laziness or low ability.
38. Common signs discussion (5 mins): Time, directions, maths facts, money, symbols, quantities. Use the discussion questions to connect to parents’ experiences and day-to-day impact.
39. Impact across ages (8–10 mins): Primary (maths anxiety, social comparison, symbol confusion, daily routines) and teenagers (deadlines, confidence, driving/jobs/study planning, resilience).
40. Supporting maths at home (10–12 mins): Demonstrate real-life maths (cooking, shopping, money). Emphasise removing time pressure, taking steps aloud, and using visuals (number lines/charts/colour coding).

41. Pair-share: maths in interests (5 mins): “Do your kids enjoy cooking or music? How could you incorporate maths?” Share examples (measuring, doubling, timers; counting beats, patterns, fractions).
42. Homework support: Praise Sandwich (10–12 mins): Teach praise → correct only 1–2 targets → praise. Parents practice the sample text using a simple template.
43. Activity 1: Crossing the midline (5 mins): Cross-body knee taps (right hand to left knee, then switch). Explain that it supports coordination and sequencing.
44. Activity 2: Clapping rhythms (5 mins): Copy simple patterns (clap-clap-snap; clap-snap-clap). Emphasise rhythm as sequencing and memory practice.
45. More multisensory ideas (3–5 mins): Hands-on maths with objects; “Simon Says” directions; treasure hunt counting prompts.
46. Thinking ahead (3–5 mins): Each parent chooses one small thing to try at home this week.
47. Close and self-praise (2 mins): Encourage parents to recognise their own effort and progress.
48. Course feedback (8–10 mins): In small groups discuss what they enjoyed, what they want more/less of, and whether the length suited them. Collect notes or invite follow-up feedback by email.

#### **Parent Home Plan (Week 4)**

- Choose one: (a) a real-life maths moment (cooking/shopping/money) with no time pressure, (b) use the Praise Sandwich once during homework (only 1–2 corrections), or (c) do 2 minutes of crossing-the-midline or clapping rhythms before homework.
- Keep it small and achievable; celebrate any effort.

## **Appendix A — Praise Sandwich Mini-Template**

Use this to practice giving supportive feedback without overwhelming the child.

- Top Bun (Praise): Name two specific things the child did well.
- Filling (Correct): Choose only 1–2 targets to correct today (e.g., just spelling, or just one step in maths).
- Bottom Bun (Praise): End with encouragement and confidence-building feedback.

## **Appendix B — Quick Reference: Home Strategy Menu**

- Regulation: short movement break, sensory tool, calm music, short, timed work bursts.
- Reading: paired reading, echo reading, audiobooks with text, picture walk, highlighting key words.
- Writing: talk first, dictate first draft, sentence building, word banks.
- Memory: checklists, visual routines, repeat the same structure, praise effort.
- Maths: hands-on objects, real-life maths (cooking/shopping/money), visuals (number line/colour coding), and remove time pressure.