



# Practice sheet – UNIT 2

**Objective:** To provide knowledge on SLDs

## Introduction – What are Specific Learning Disorders?

Specific Learning Disorders (SLDs), also known as “Dys” disorders, are the family of neurodevelopmental disorders that affect one’s ability to develop certain abilities like reading, writing, speaking, calculating, or coordinating motor tasks. They are called “Specific” Learning Disorders because one or some of the necessary elements used in the learning process are challenged. In other words, a person having an SLD can have difficulties processing information or stimuli because their brain receives, integrates, retains, and expresses information differently. It is important to mention that each person with an SLD will not be affected in the same way. Some will experience minor difficulties, while others will be affected more severely.

It is estimated that between 5% and 12% of the European population is living with at least one “Dys” disorder. Indeed, it is not uncommon for several SLDs to co-occur within the same learner.





## What are the different types of SLDs?

- **Dyslexia:** A cognitive disorder causing difficulties in reading and language-based processing skills. The brain takes longer than usual to identify and connect letters and words with other kinds of knowledge, for example, translating them into sounds. Dyslexia can affect reading fluency, reading comprehension, writing, decoding, spelling, and sometimes speech.
- **Dyspraxia:** A disorder that is characterised by difficulty in muscle control, which can cause problems with movement and coordination, and can affect language and speech. Children with dyspraxia might, for example, have difficulties executing tasks that require fine motor skills (holding a pencil, buttoning a shirt, etc.).
- **Dysgraphia:** A disorder that affects a person's handwriting ability and fine motor skills. It can cause difficulties with spelling, spatial planning on paper, following instructions, thinking and writing at the same time, and writing long sentences.
- **Dyscalculia:** A disorder that affects a person's ability to understand numbers and learn math facts. This means, for example, that children with dyscalculia have trouble telling the time or counting, have poor comprehension of math symbols and operators, and struggle with memorising and organising numbers.
- **Dysphasia:** A language disorder that involves difficulties with speaking and understanding spoken words. This can be translated into difficulties in sequencing sentences into words, as children with dysphasia are unable to tell where a word ends, and the next one begins.





## Why is it important to accommodate children with SLDs?

Children with SLDs are evolving in a world that is not adapted to them, which is creating more stress and difficulty as they constantly need to adapt themselves. By providing them with reasonable accommodations, we are reducing the risk of them developing bad self-esteem or a general disinterest in the learning process, which is what happens when a person with a “Dys” disorder does not receive the help they need.

## Early signs of SLDs?

Dysfunctional disorders can have various early signs in children. It is important to note that the presence of one or more of these signs does not necessarily mean that a child has a dys disorder, but it may indicate the need for further assessment by a professional. Here is a list of common early signs associated with different dys disorders:

- Difficulty learning nursery rhymes for his age group
- Difficulty paying attention, sitting still and listening to stories
- Difficulty learning to sing or recite the alphabet
- Slow speech development
- Some memory problems, for example remembering a simple rhythm
- Difficulty carrying out two or more instructions at the same time (e.g. putting toys in the box, then putting them back on the shelf), but this is not a problem if the tasks are presented in small units





- Forgets names of friends, colours, animals etc.
- Difficulty cutting, pasting and colouring compared with children their own age
- Difficulty getting dressed, for example tying shoelaces or putting on buttons.
- Difficulty catching, kicking or throwing a ball
- An increase in clumsy actions, the dyslexic child may trip or bump into objects, etc.
- Difficulty jumping or hopping

It is important to note that these signs may vary from one child to another and may also manifest themselves differently at different ages. If you have any concerns about your child's development, or if you think they may be showing signs of dyslexia, it is advisable to consult a professional (speech therapist, neuropaediatrician, etc.) for a thorough assessment and appropriate advice. The sooner these disorders are identified, the sooner appropriate interventions can be put in place to help the child overcome his or her difficulties.

