

# Specific Learning Difficulties



Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) is characterized by persistent difficulties learning and applying academic skills. In Hong Kong, the most common type of SpLD is related to reading and writing, commonly referred to as Dyslexia. Students with SpLD may struggle with reading, spelling, dictation and writing tasks, despite having average intelligence and receiving formal education.

## Individuals with Dyslexia may experience the following conditions:

### Spelling/Dictation

- Add or omit strokes, radicals or letters when writing
- Forget how to write/spell certain words

### Written expression

- Have a notable difference in the ability to express themselves in writing compared to speaking

### Reading accuracy

- Affect reading fluency, leading to mispronunciations or forgotten pronunciations that hinder comprehension of written materials, such as lecture slides or research articles

### Reading speed

- Struggle to maintain focus on what they are reading, affecting their ability to complete tasks efficiently

Students with dyslexia often require significantly more time and effort to complete academic tasks involving reading and writing. This greatly affects their overall academic performance.

## Other forms of SpLD include:

- **Dysgraphia:** difficulty related to information processing and motor skills
- **Dyscalculia:** difficulty with number sense, memorizing arithmetic facts, calculation and mathematical reasoning

# Diagnosis and Treatment



In Hong Kong, SpLD is typically diagnosed by clinical or educational psychologists. Early identification and intervention are vital, as they teach students skills for reading and writing, ultimately improving their educational performance and outcomes.

## Supporting Students with Specific Learning Difficulties

University life can present unique challenges for individuals with SpLD, particularly in social communications, academic performance, and emotion well-being. Helpful tips may include:

### Social Communication

- ✓ Break down complex requests into manageable steps
- ✓ Encourage participation in peer support group to enhance connection and tips/strategy sharing

### Academic Support

- ✓ Allow extended time in examinations (with professional's recommendation)
- ✓ Allow the use of screen readers to facilitate comprehension of texts
- ✓ Equip students with effective study skills and strategies, for example:
  - Multi-sensory learning strategies
  - Specific reading and writing skills
  - Utilization of graphic organizers, such as tables, flowcharts and mind maps
- ✓ Modify paper formats, for example:
  - Enlarging question papers e.g. to A3 size for better readability
  - Offering single-sided printing
  - Using colored paper
- ✓ Offer in-class support, for example:
  - Multi-sensory teaching methods
  - Recapping core concepts to facilitate and reinforce understanding



### Psychological Support

- ✓ Refer to psychological counseling service for students' mental health and adversity coping capability

It is essential to recognize that individuals with SpLD have unique strengths and capacity. Fostering an inclusive and supportive environment can empower students to develop and pursue their goals with confidence and resources they need.

