



Guide to Going to University

A mixed bag of emotions we are sure. Nerves, excitement, uncertainty - all perfectly normal. Below we have pulled together some useful tips and advice from young people with dyspraxia who have been to University already, that we hope will be helpful in planning for this next stage in your lives.

Before you go!

Applying for support:

It is really useful to contact your university's disability support services before you start, to find out what support they offer as a university. They should be able to put together a summary of reasonable adjustments to be sent out to relevant members of staff. This may include things such as permission to record lectures, getting lecture slides in advance and/or in a certain format, exam arrangements, and extensions for assignments.

In addition to the adjustments that can be put into place by the university itself, there is also DSA (Disabled Students' Allowance). This is a payment that allows you to purchase specialist equipment and software that will help you in your studies. This may include software (speech-to-text software, text-to-speech software, mind mapping software and note-taking software), a printer, voice recorder, a book stand, amongst other things. You may also be able to receive 1:1 study skills support, which may be able to be provided by your university. Sessions may cover things such as decoding assignments, breaking things down into smaller chunks and planning your time effectively.

It is definitely recommended you apply for support as soon as possible before you start your course as the DSA process may take quite a long time (but don't let that put you off from applying). You'll need to fill out a form first and provide evidence of your dyspraxia. You will then be invited to attend a needs assessment where you will talk to a needs assessor about how your dyspraxia affects you and they will advise on things that may help you with your studies. They will then write a report, and may be able to give you quotes from a few different companies. Once this has been approved by student finance, you will be able to contact the companies to arrange for the equipment to be delivered and/or other support to be put into place.

"I would definitely encourage people to disclose and apply for DSA because dyspraxic people are eligible! You need to have a good amount of paperwork as evidence, but it is worth doing. I got offered software for my laptop, a printer with a certain allowance for ink cartridges and paper per year (for my mental health difficulties associated with dyspraxia) and a specialist 1:1 mentor as well as study skills support sessions, which will hopefully help support me and enable me to succeed in my studies."

Below are some links to various websites that have lots of information on this topic;

Government website offering advice and how to apply for Disabled Students Allowance;

<https://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas/overview>

Your DSA

Provides useful information on: **Student Finance, Work grants, Specialist Support, and Assistive Technology.**

They produce easy to follow, step-by-step guides for: The **Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)** and **Access to Work (AtW)**, including contact directories for: **Diagnostic Assessments, Needs Assessments, Assistive Technology, Specialist Support, and Assessments for Work.**

<http://www.yourdsa.com/>

DnA (Diversity and Ability)

Offers a variety of services, in [Education](#) and the [Workplace](#), all with the end goal of enablement and facilitating independent learning

<https://www.dnamatters.co.uk/>

<https://www.dnamatters.co.uk/resources/dsa/intro/>

Access 1st

Offers needs assessments, advice and support for disabled students in Higher Education

<https://www.access-1st.co.uk/>

AbilityNet

Supports people of any age and with any disability to use technology to achieve their goals at home, at work and in education

<https://www.abilitynet.org.uk/dsa/what-are-DSAs>

Visit your University before hand

“A thing that helped me which may be helpful to others is visiting the university beforehand i.e. going to open days as well as arranging to meet with a tutor before you start, to discuss any concerns you have and points you want to raise. I found this very reassuring, and I got familiar with the campus building etc before I actually started, so now I'm used to it more and it's not such a big transition”

Packing

Pack up what you want to take with you well in advance so you are not throwing it all in at the last minute where you will likely forget something. Making a list first is a great idea.

<https://www.ucas.com/connect/blogs/big-list-absolutely-everything-you-need-take-university>

Food

Get practising a few signature dinner dishes at home and try out on your family, so you will then know you will get in a few good meals in the week. There are loads of good student cookbooks out there.

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/collection/student>

Washing and Cleaning

If you are not all that familiar with a washing machine or never visited a laundrette perhaps spend some time familiarising yourself with the machines as one, you don't want all your clothes to shrink or come out pink and two, trust me your parents/carers will be very pleased not to have your entire wardrobe to wash on your return!

It is an area that can't be ignored - if you clean as you go, it will be easier in the long run. Rotas are great idea and bleach is cheap and keeps the toilet a clean place to visit!

Travel

If you live at home and commute to university do the route a few times in advance so that you become familiar with it – if you struggle with sense of direction this will be really helpful.

Once you are there

The temptation to leave the unpacking may be great but to get unpacked and your room all organised is the best thing to do so that you can find everything you need straight away and realise in time if you have forgotten anything and need to go out a buy it!

If you move into halls or a shared house, do the same. Spend some time working out how long it will take from your halls to the different places you need to be and check out the local bus/tram or train routes well in advance. Using the calendar app on your phone can be really helpful here too. You can put the time of the train or bus you are going to get on there and the time that you need to leave so that everything is in one place. You can also set alerts for a certain amount of time beforehand too.

Lectures

If you're supposed to receive lecture slides in advance for a lecture (as part of your summary of reasonable adjustments) but don't get them, then don't be afraid to email the lecturers. Their job is to teach you and support your learning. If they haven't emailed you the slides in advance then it's most likely that they've simply forgotten and will be more than happy to send them to you.

Sometimes you need permission from lecturers to record their lecture. You may find where this is the case, it is easier to email them in advance rather than having to worry about that at the start of the lecture.

One young person who did this gives a useful tip about it here:

“I wouldn’t listen to the whole lecture again when I got home (I tried to do this initially but it just took so much time), but I would listen to the bits where I had lost concentration/not been able to make the notes I needed to.”

You might get a few questions from people about the software or equipment you’re using. One young person said:

“I was worried when I started that I would be the only one using a voice recorder in lectures and that people would ask me lots of questions about it, but in my undergraduate degree there were actually quite a few other people who had similar support from DSA too.”

Disclosing dyspraxia

This is a very individual and personal choice and you may find the information sheets ‘Disclosing your dyspraxia’ useful:

<https://www.dfyouth.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Disclosing-your-Dyspraxia-DCD-16.6.17-with-clip-art-2.pdf>

<https://dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Disclosure-Document-Oct-16.pdf>

Here are some young people’s experiences of this

“I personally didn’t disclose dyspraxia to most of my lecturers. I had quite a lot of different lecturers for different modules so felt it wasn’t really necessary and there wasn’t really anything they needed to know about in the lectures (everything was in my summary of reasonable adjustments). This might vary depending on your course though. I did, however, disclose dyspraxia to my supervisors for my dissertation for both my undergraduate and Master’s degree.”

“Before I started uni, I was quite worried about disclosing dyspraxia to my peers and wasn’t really very confident in explaining what it is. I soon learnt that I didn’t have anything to worry about at all though! Thankfully my friends were all really understanding.”

“I disclosed my dyspraxia online both when applying for Disabled Students Allowance, and to my course tutors and university welfare and disability team. It is a personal choice and one many people may not be willing or comfortable enough to take, but I would advise any new students to disclose. Even if you don’t think you need certain support that you will be offered, it’s easier to have it in place and discover that you don’t need it than to really struggle and discover you need it later. You may be offered support you may not have thought of, and you may find that you really benefit from it and it makes it easier for you to succeed in your studies.”

Assignments

These great tips are from a graduate with dyspraxia:

1. Start as soon as possible - often it's the things that you would think would be quick that actually take longer than you think!
2. Plan your time - especially when you have multiple assignments at once, planning your time really helps. Make sure you schedule time to rest too though - that is so important!
3. Decode the questions - break down the questions and work out exactly what they are asking you. Sometimes you may initially interpret a question differently and not realise what it is actually asking you until you break it down.
4. Referencing - google scholar is really useful for this. If you search for the article you want and click on the quotation mark symbol underneath the title of the journal article, it then presents references in various formats which you can copy and paste into your reference list and edit where necessary. It speeds up the process so much!
5. Resources - Academic phrasebank <http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk> is a really useful resource for phrasing certain styles of sentences, particularly to start off with when university assignments are new. Word definitions - using a resource with definitions of task words is really helpful for assignments. Sometimes what you think an assignment is asking you to do is different to what it is actually asking. Voice typing on google docs (only works with chrome) - this is a really useful alternative to speech-to-text software.
6. Use your Phone - the 'Reminders' and 'Calendar' app on your phone can be so helpful. Perhaps have a different list in reminders for each day of the week and would break everything down into small chunks.
7. Reading - even if the information for a module says you have to read a whole chapter, you don't always have to read every single page of the chapter. Just read the relevant bits - this is something that will get easier with practice.

Get organised

Choose an organiser of choice and use it! E.g. an app for organising on your phone, a calendar, diary, white board etc. This will help in the early days to work out when, where and what time you will need to be at places.

Your phone can also help with planning as you can set up reminders 10 mins before you are to be anywhere, Use as an alarm clock for those 9am lectures and if you have Maps these can help you find where you need to be if your campus is spread out.

See Dyspraxia Foundation information sheet on 'Useful Apps'

www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk

Downtime

Whatever you do at home to relax or do as a hobby, find the nearest place to do it in your new town/City. Find the details to the local gym or local pool or art class or drama group, some of these may run as part of the universities extracurricular activities. Join up so that when you need some down time or need to relax or work out you know all the details of where and when.

Your University should let you know all about the activities/sports and clubs they offer at Fresher's Week so go along and see what is going on that might appeal.

Nights out- Stay safe! Plan beforehand, how you plan to get home and take some extra money for a taxi should the plans change. Always let someone know where you are going and what time to expect you home. Stay to main, well-lit roads if walking anywhere. Sit near the driver if on a bus or tram. Carry a personal alarm

Below are some links to some other useful websites offering some great tips and advice and also links to some of the information sheets you may also find useful?

<https://www.dfyouth.org.uk/support/factsheets/>

Other useful links that may help;

<https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/preparing-to-go/staying-safe-at-university/top-tips-to-stay-safe/>

<http://www.savethestudent.org/extra-guides/freshers/13-skills-to-help-you-survive-university.html>

<http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/student-guide>

<http://www.themix.org.uk/work-and-study/student-life>

<https://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/university/freshers/>

Further information available from:

Dyspraxia Foundation, 8 West Alley, Hitchin, Herts SG5 1EG
Tel: 01462 454986 (Helpline) / 01462 455016 (Administration)
Fax: 01462 455052 Email: dyspraxia@dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk
Website: www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk
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