A new Dyspraxia/DCD diagnosis

What is Dyspraxia/DCD?

Dyspraxia, or Developmental Coordination Development (DCD) as it is also known, is a condition that affects fine and gross motor coordination (organisation of bigger and smaller movements) which can affect the performance of day-to-day activities (at home, in school, during play).

Dyspraxia or Developmental Co-ordination disorder is more common than you would think with research showing that around 5-6% of the population (or 1 in 20 people) have dyspraxia.

Dyspraxia is different for everyone, with each person demonstrating their own strengths and challenges.

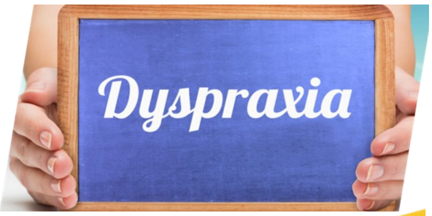
Diagnostic criteria for Dyspraxia/DCD

Four criteria need to be met for a Dyspraxia/DCD diagnosis, as highlighted in the DSM-5 diagnostic manual. These are:

1. The acquisition and execution of coordinated motor skills is substantially below that expected given the individual's chronological age and opportunity for skill learning and use. Difficulties are manifested in areas such as throwing and catching, writing, cycling, self-care andbody awareness among others.
2. The motor skills deficit in Criterion A significantly and persistently interferes with activities of daily living appropriate to chronological age (e.g., self-care and self-maintenance) and impatcts academic/school, leisure, and play.
3. Onset of symptoms is in the early developmental period.
4. The motor skills deficits are not better explained by intellectual disability (intellectual developmental disorder) or visual impairment and are not attributable to a neurological condition affecting movement (e.g., cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, degenerative disorder).

An OT can assess for criteria 1, 2 and 3 but a medical officer (GP, Paediatrician or Neurologist) will need to rule out any of the conditions highlighted in criteria 4 to complete the diagnosis.

If you have received an OT report which indicated criteria 1, 2 and 3 have been met you will still need to have a medical officer review for criteria 4 to complete the DCD Diagnosis.



What to do when you get your report

- **Read the report**
- **Give yourself time to digest the information**
- **Return to the report**
- **Highlight key information**
- **Separate into what can be done at home or at school**
- **Pick 3 reasonable targets for each (potentially the same three)**
- **Consider which professionals may need to be contacted (GP, paediatrician, therapist etc)**
- **Don't try to do everything at once**

School supports

Firstly, if you have not already done so, please do liaise with your child's school particularly your child's SEN teacher/ SET Coordinator.

This will ensure that there is a current, written support plan or Individual Education Plan (IEP) in place and that they are aware of any challenges your child may be having. This should be reviewed yearly with the school.

You may wish to share the recommendations of this assessment, should you feel comfortable to do so.

Having regular dialogue and communication with the school is very important and it is beneficial to liaise with them regularly regarding your child's support plan.

Tips for meeting with school:

- Meet early in process
- Explain what Dyspraxia is/Isn't
- Suggest strategies that have worked well in the past
- Explain how Dyspraxia affects your child
- Describe child's strengths and interests too
- Explain that Dyspraxia can be very frustrating for the child
- Consult the NCSE Guidelines for speaking with schools

Questions to ask school:

How will the school support my child?

As a parent, how can I help the school to support my child?

How will my child be included in school/class activities with other students?

How will my child access assistive technology, if required?

What forms of home-school communication will be available?

As a parent, who in the school should I contact if I am aware my child is having difficulty?

Additional supports & reading

Videos

We have a number of supporting videos on our YouTube channel at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC7qg68PTFMujM5o4e9r5w2A/videos?view=0&sort=dd&shelf_id=0 which include practical strategies to support parents and provide information on Dyspraxia/DCD.

Dr Dorothy Armstrong https://youtu.be/QDbEEbLtats is a very useful watch.

An informative video is hosted by Dr Aine O'Dea https://youtu.be/App9wzxTYo4 which you may find very helpful, now that you have had a diagnosis.

Social Groups

We also partner with other organisations who offer online social groups to neurodiverse teenagers:

- Teen Social/Support Groups https://adhdireland.ie
- All Abilities Ireland (a range of activities) https://www.allabilities.ie

Sports Partnerships

Consider contacting your local sports partnership (LSP) to see what alternative or accessible activities are available in your locality.

Consider what LSPs are within driving distance not just in your own county as each offer variations in activities:

https://www.sportireland.ie/participation/lsp-contact-finder

Top Tips

Sign up to newsletters to keep up to date on new programmes:

Local library:

Contact your local library in relation to the Toys, Technology and Training intiatives (or something similar) where some local libraries provide educational and sensory equipment on loan to trial before purchase, new technology and information as well as training and coaching on a variety of areas. Some libraries have copies of TTRS (Touch Type Read and Spell) typing software available to borrow.

Education centres:

Contact your local education centre to see if they are currently running any family or parental courses. Education centres are traditionally for teacher training and CPD though many have expanded into parental and family education courses with many courses provided both online and face to face in some centres.

Study supports

In terms of supports, it is very common for children with Dyspraxia/DCD to struggle with organisational and application skills.

Whilst we cannot recommend specific tutors, an occupational therapist can help a child/young adult develop good organisational and study habits for learning. This can also alleviate some of the associated stress for the child.

As such you may find it useful to engage with an Occupational Therapy service/clinician (with regard to recommendations in the original report).

You can find details in your region on the AOTI website https://www.aoti.ie/ot-directory

When you contact an OT or other clinician please do ask if they have experience in Dyspraxia/DCD.