

Independent Writing using Microsoft Word

There are a lot of features in Microsoft Word that help with dyslexic difficulties. Here are the main ones that are helpful:

1. AutoCorrect in Microsoft Word 2007

This is a wonderful help to people with dyslexia and it comes free with Microsoft Word. After some practice using it, it can become a habit and a huge bank of common spelling errors specific to the individual can be built up. Make sure you have the correct entry selected for each spelling mistake! Sometimes you may have to check with somebody. Once you do this the first time, it will automatically correct every time you spell that word wrongly. Some people might have more than one AutoCorrect entry for the same word.

You can use the AutoCorrect feature to correct typos and misspelt words, as well as to insert symbols and other pieces of text. AutoCorrect is set up by default with a list of typical misspellings and symbols, but you can modify the list that AutoCorrect uses.

Add a text entry to the AutoCorrect list during a spelling check

If you enable automatic spelling checking in Microsoft Word, you can right-click a word that you typically misspell and add it directly to the AutoCorrect list.

1. Right-click a word that has a wavy red underline.
2. A list of corrections for the misspelt word appears.
3. Point to **AutoCorrect** on the shortcut menu.
4. If the menu that is displayed shows the correct spelling of the word, click it.

If not corrected, continue to the next step.



1. Click the **Microsoft Office Button** , and then click **Word Options**.
2. In the **Word Options** dialogue box, click **Proofing**, and then click **AutoCorrect Options**
3. On the **AutoCorrect** tab, make sure the **Replace text as you type** checkbox is selected.
4. In the **Replace** box, type a word or phrase that you often mistype or misspell — for example, type **usually**.
5. In the **With** box, type the correct spelling of the word — for example, type **usually**.
6. Click **Add**.

Note:

If all the spelling suggestions listed when you right-click are wrong, you will need to go back to the word and make a better attempt at spelling it. You may have only one or two letters wrong. Then try right-clicking again and see if the word appears on the list.

2. Add words to your spelling checker dictionary

When you use the spelling checker, it compares the words in your document with those in the tool's main dictionary. The main dictionary contains the most common words.

It might not include proper names, technical terms, or acronyms (e.g. DAI for Dyslexia Association of Ireland). In addition, some words might be capitalised differently in the main dictionary than in your document. Adding such words or capitalisation to a custom dictionary prevents the spelling checker from flagging them as mistakes.

Any custom dictionary setting you change in one Microsoft Office program affects all the other programs, such as PowerPoint.

3. Line Spacing

This refers to the vertical spacing between the lines. Increased spacing between lines makes it easier to read.

1. Select the paragraphs for which you want to change the line spacing.
2. On the **Home** tab, in the **Paragraph** group, click **Line Spacing**.



3. Click the number of line spaces that you want. It is 1.5 in this document and you can adjust to make spacing bigger or smaller, whatever makes it easier to read.

4. Text size

The standard size for Word Documents is Size 12. If you need bigger than this while you are typing, use the zoom feature on the bottom right of the screen in the document. (Office 2007).

5. Dyslexia-friendly fonts and typefaces - matter of choice

Typeface: Style or pattern of a set of letters, their thickness, roundness or how fancy they are.

Font: What you apply to the typeface – bold, italic, size, space between lines and letters.

Here are some examples of different typefaces:

Times New Roman is the traditional print choice and is the default font on Microsoft. It is not used much on websites.

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

Comic Sans is thought to be too childlike, yet many like it. It would not be generally acceptable in academic writing.

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

Arial is liked by many dyslexic people as it is 'not curly'.

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

Tahoma is the preferred choice of many dyslexic readers.

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

Verdana is a popular choice on web pages.

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

It is a matter of individual choice. Some people like to try out a few different ones and then set their favourite one as the default font on their own computer.

6. Change background colour of Microsoft Word 2007 document

Some people like to change to background colour of their document from white, as they may have problems with glare from the computer screen. The document will still be printed with a white background. A cream or a pale blue is often the colour of choice for dyslexic readers.

1. On the **Page Layout** tab, in the **Page Background** group, click **Page Colour**.



2. Do one of the following:

- Click the new colour that you want under **Theme Colours** or **Standard Colours**.
- Click **Fill Effects** to change or add special effects, such as gradients, textures, or patterns.

7. Thesaurus and Synonyms

Using the Research feature, you can look up synonyms (different words with the same meaning) and antonyms (words with the opposite meaning) in the thesaurus.

The quick way: You can look up a word quickly if you right-click it in the document, and then click **Synonym** on the drop-down menu. Or you can follow this:

1. On the **Review** tab, click **Thesaurus**.
2. Press ALT and click the word that you want to look up. Results appear in the **Research** task pane.
3. To use one of the words in the list of results or to search for more words, do one of the following:
 - To use one of the words, point to it, click the down arrow, and then click **Insert** or **Copy**.
 - To look up additional related words, click a word in the list of results.

References:

Microsoft Office Help- Click on the Question mark symbol on Word (top right in 2007).

Smyth, I. (2010) *Dyslexia in the Digital Age: Making IT Work*. Continuum. Glasgow.