

A guide to dyspraxia

What is DCD?

Developmental coordination disorder (DCD), also known as dyspraxia, is a relatively common condition that affects movement and coordination in both children and adults. It affects approximately 5% of school-aged children, with around 2% experiencing more severe symptoms. In most cases, difficulties continue into adolescence and adulthood. The condition is more common in males than females, although girls are often identified at a later age. While DCD is a distinct condition, many individuals also have co-occurring diagnoses, though this is not always the case. It is often described as a hidden neurodivergence, as its effects are not always immediately visible and the condition remains widely misunderstood. DCD can impact many aspects of daily life, making everyday tasks that others find simple more challenging



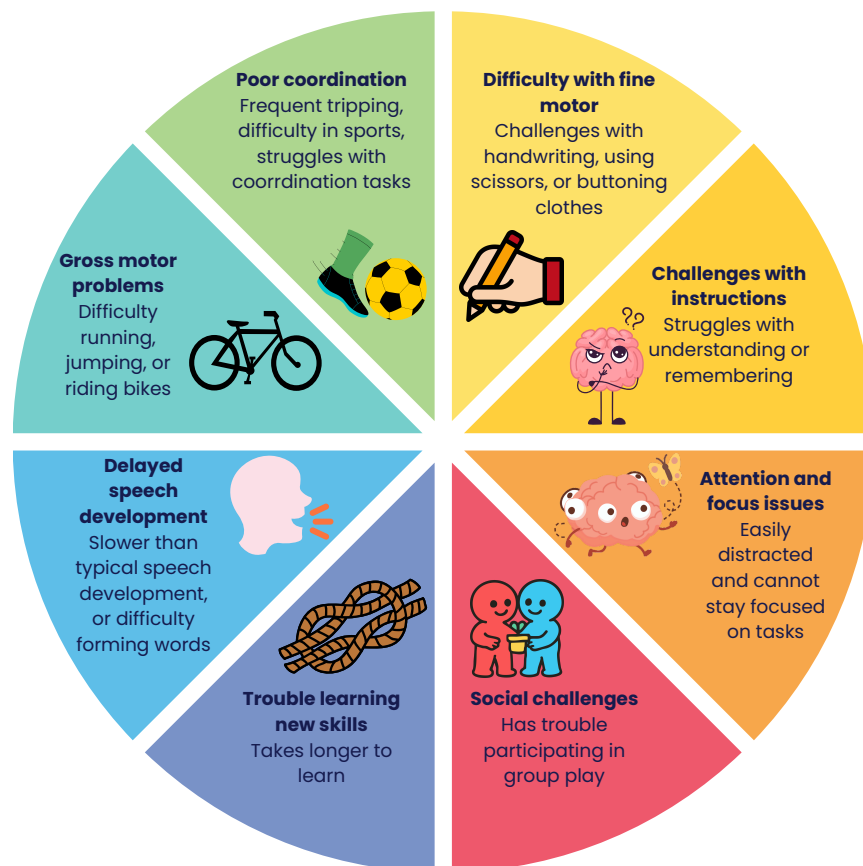
Traits of DCD

Each person's experience of DCD is unique. The way it presents can be influenced by factors such as age, the opportunities they've had to learn and practise skills, the expectations of their environment, and the level of support from those around them.

Common difficulties for people with DCD may include:

- Movement difficulties
- Awkward movement and lack of smoothness
- Poor spatial awareness meaning more trips, bumps and bruises
- Difficulty learning the movements required to carry out new practical tasks
- Difficulty transferring motor skills to new situations or activities
- A tendency to require explicit teaching for new skills rather than learning them instinctively

- Limited understanding of spatial concepts such as in, on, or in front of
- Organisational difficulties
- Hard to follow instructions
- Often loses things
- Difficulty with time management
- Challenges with fine motor skills (e.g., using cutlery, writing, or buttoning clothes)
- Being slow or uncoordinated when dressing
- Messy eating or difficulty handling food and utensils
- Poor pencil grip. Writing is slow and immature
- Delayed speech and language development, with possible social communication challenges
- May struggle to keep up with conversations. There may be long, awkward pauses before they respond to a question or comment.
- Some people with dyspraxia have verbal dyspraxia, also known as developmental verbal dyspraxia (DVD) or childhood apraxia of speech. It causes difficulty coordinating the mouth movements needed for clear speech and may occur on its own or alongside other coordination challenges.
- Resistance to changes in routine or environment
- Executive functioning difficulties
- Difficulties with working memory (the ability to hold and manipulate information in the short term).
- Difficulties with cognitive flexibility/flexible thinking (adapting to change/switching between tasks).
- Difficulties with inhibitory control (self-control and impulsive behaviours)
- Executive functioning can be reduced when feeling tired or overwhelmed.



Causes of DCD

DCD occurs when there is a disruption in how messages are transmitted between the brain and the body. The exact cause is still unknown, but being born prematurely, having a low birth weight, or having a family history of coordination difficulties can increase the risk.

DCD is not caused by brain damage, illness, or injury. It is a lifelong condition present from birth. In most cases, the specific reason for a person's DCD is unknown, and there may not be a single explanation for why their movement skills develop more slowly than other abilities.

How to support in your unit

- Complete an [adjustment plan](#)
- Raise awareness among leaders and members about dyspraxia and other neurodivergence and learning differences.
- Encourage the use of aids (pencil grips, writing lines, stencils) if they are used at home/school
- Consider alternatives to writing (speech to text, typing)
- Use a [visual timetable](#) and repeat instructions if needed
- Allow extra time for processing information
- Check in regularly
- Break down activities into parts and explain these separately
- Provide a quiet space if 'time out' is needed due to overwhelm
- Demonstrate how to handle equipment
- For important messages/reminders, contact parents directly
- Access [further support](#) if needed

Remember you can get help with the costs for inclusive materials and resources. This may be available in your country and region, or with the [accessible guiding grant](#) from HQ.

Useful contacts

<https://www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk>

