

# LBAT Getting Started Guide to Working Memory

## What is working memory?

This is the ability to hold information in mind and use this within a short space of time. It can be thought of as a mental 'jotting pad,' holding information for a few seconds.

Working memory is essential in many everyday tasks, such as following instructions, mental calculations, sequencing tasks and retaining information such as a telephone number or a pin number.

'Remembering' is a complex process with many steps – difficulties with the working memory impact a person's ability to retain and use information in the long term. Difficulties with working memory can have a significant impact on learning.

Poor working memory is a characteristic of many kinds of learning difficulties, including language impairments, difficulties in reading and maths (including dyslexia and dyscalculia) and some forms of attentional difficulty.

Working memory can be significantly impacted by stress.

## Indicators of working memory difficulties

- Forgetting instructions and/ or finding it difficult to follow instructions, especially multi-step
- Incomplete recall of information
- Difficulties storing and processing information
- Reliance on adults and/ or peers to stay on track
- Poor place-keeping and the need to re-read text, losing track and/ or poor copying
- Short attention span and distractible
- Inconsistent academic performance
- Difficulty 'keeping up' with the pace of lessons
- Children can appear to be 'daydreaming' or anxious if they are not able to keep up

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## Key strategies for support

- Use the indicators to identify children who may be experiencing working memory difficulties
- Support pupils to identify strategies which work well for them and ensure that they can use these across the curriculum
- Ensure that tasks are planned to reduce demand on working memory
- Make explicit links to prior learning
- Relate new information to real world experiences, personal interests and use pictures, objects and familiar places
- Ensure that instructions are given one step at a time, in short and concise statements
- When reiterating instructions, use the same language to reduce processing demands
- Use modelling and examples, e.g. 'what a good one looks like.'
- Use visuals to support the child to remember the steps, such as task planners and other organisational tools including assistive technologies
- Use other memory aids, such as their own copies of notes/ presentations, coloured highlighting, bullet summaries and key words
- Songs, limericks and mnemonics may be useful
- Consider assistive technologies such as voice recorders and voice to text software
- Support the child in developing self-advocacy skills and resilience so they are confident asking for help

## Useful resources and links:

- <https://framework.thedyslexia-spldtrust.org.uk/resources/understanding-working-memory-classroom-guide>
- <https://nasen.org.uk/uploads/assets/e227fce8-87f7-4630-bc4606a87e2bec53/Supporting-pupils-with-SID.pdf>
- <https://thepsychologist.bps.org.uk/volume-21/edition-5/working-memory-classroom>
- <https://www.callscotland.org.uk/blog/apps-for-memory-and-organisation/>

For additional information and support, contact your LBAT Advisory Teacher