

Freebee advice sheets

Teaching Time to dyslexics and dyspraxics.

Most of the kids who come for assessment to us struggle with time. This is mostly because schools insist upon having the traditional analogue clock with hands and these are really hard for dyslexic and dyspraxic kids to read.

Not being able to tell the time means that they are not able to judge when a class or a lesson is about to end. They are not able to tell how long away lunch will be. They cannot go out and play with friends because they do not know when to return. Frequently they do not even know what time school starts and finishes etc. This must make them feel lost and helpless. In the UK day care centres are full of adult dyspraxics who are there because they cannot manage time properly.

I have devoted a whole section on this in my book *Dyspraxia a guide for parents and teachers*, so if you want to know more get this book.

Here are some basic tips to help your kid with time.

- Forget the analogue clocks with hands when your child is young. These are very hard when you are still confused between right and left, and you cannot see the hands move so kids do not always realise that the hands are actually going round the clock. Also there are usually not any numbers for on the clock for the minute hand.
- If you do wish to teach with them you must change your clock and put the minute numbers on as well. I have taken out all the screws in mine, taken it apart and added these numbers. I also colour coded the hands to match the numbers. Mine has gold numbers for the minute hand that is now coloured gold, and the other numbers and hand is left black. You also have to demonstrate how the hands move and explain how long they take to go around the clock.

- I prefer to teach kids digital time first because this is so much easier to learn. Then you give them a digital watch so they have the time with them always. There are lots of boys ones out there. Try to get a waterproof one so your son does not have to take it off and lose it! Very few ones can be found for girls but Smiggles sell a line of bright plastic ones in purple, pink etc. The time is vertical rather than horizontal on these watches so you have to teach it that way. Ask the shop assistant to set it for you before you leave as it's hard.
- When teaching digital time the only numbers you have to remember are 59 and 12. 59 is the largest number in minutes and 12 is hours. Please use a 12 hour clock at first. Kids think that minutes should go to 60 because there are 60 minutes in an hour.
- Use this watch to time things, like meals homework, driving to school etc. The more timing you do the quicker your kid will get used to time and reading the clock.
- Actually sit and watch the time go round and learn how long a minute is. Also watch it go to the next hour from for example, from 2.59 to 3 o'clock.
- Build up a time line putting down the time the kid gets up, goes to school, has meals etc for number of days so s/he gets used to the routine.
- The more you just mess "around with time", by observing, timing, guessing what the time is the quicker your child will understand what it all actually means.
- Please never teach time using sheets with random clock faces or telling some random time. Time is fluid and ever changing. Time is real and a part of life. It is the single most important part of a math course but it should not be taught in isolation. There is no point in being able to read a clock unless you know how time relates to your life. Schools teach how long an hour is, 60 minutes, and how long a minute is, 60

seconds, but they rarely teach how long a second is.
It is vital that you know how long a second is.