

USEFUL STRATEGIES FOR STUDYING & NOTE-TAKING

for those who are dyslexic



A MINI GUIDE

Provided by The Danish
Dyslexia Association and
Dyslexia Youth (DU)
in June 2024

SPECIAL THANKS

To Julie Kirkemand Riisby
from Dyslexia Youth (DU)
for her contributions to
this guide.

What does this guide include?

A lot of people with dyslexia struggle with poor working memory, making it challenging to remember and process large sums of new knowledge, which is often a prerequisite to complete higher education. Students with dyslexia often have difficulty mastering a study and note-taking technique that works well for them. However, once you have developed an efficient study and note-taking technique, it will make it much easier for you to complete your education.

The Danish Dyslexia Association has therefore created a guide “Useful strategies for studying & note-taking for those who are dyslexic”. The purpose of the guide is to introduce the students to appropriate techniques for people with dyslexia - helping them to complete higher education. It’s not certain that all the presented techniques will work for you, but if you can use one or more techniques your student life will be much more enjoyable.

The guide is written by Julie Kirkemann Riisby who is a graduate student at Veterinary Medicine in Copenhagen. Julie is dyslexic herself and uses IT aids daily. Julie has written this guide based on her own personal experiences as a dyslexic student in higher education, and the topics in this guide have been selected based on the most common questions that Julie has answered as a volunteer SPS supervisor in the Association.

On the next couple of pages, you will find more information about the following subjects:

- Reading strategy
- Note-taking techniques
- Online programs – AudioNote and Google Docs
- Mind maps
- Concept cards
- Memory – Techniques to help you remember more information
- The computer is your best friend, shortcuts and website search
- Useful websites for people with dyslexia

We sincerely hope that you can benefit from this guide, which was published by The Danish Dyslexia Association and Dyslexia Youth (DU) in June 2024.

We wish you a pleasant reading!

Reading strategy

Reading scientific papers

This section focuses on reading scientific text in higher education.

The given advice will work, if you often experience using too much time and energy on reading, where instead you could use the time concentrating on processing the information while getting the text read out loud. You are encouraged to try the following advice and see if it might give you a more focused and thus faster reading of the material you need to process.

- Start by looking through the Table of Content. This will provide you with an overview of the content of each chapter.
- Now look at the back of the book in the book's index, and notice which words are most referenced. It must be assumed that those are the topics or words that are the most important in the book.

You have now obtained an initial overview of your book. When you are about to start reading about a particular topic or a particular chapter, it is suggested that you:

- ... Flips through the chapter as you read all the headlines. By now, you might already have decided to skip some pages, you have deemed unnecessary to read.
- ... In your second review of the chapter, you will read subheadings and captions. You may already feel that you understand most of the chapter from just subtitles and captions, that you then decide not to read the body text.
- ... If there are subtitles and captions you do not understand, then you will read the body text for those.

This way of reading is a way of getting you through a long syllabus faster without reading all the text in your book, which might take too much of your time and is basically completely unnecessary. Do not feel that this way of reading is cheating or a lazy way – instead, your motto for your student life should be “Study smarter, not harder”.

Note-taking techniques

There are different types of techniques that can improve your note-taking. These different techniques will be presented in the following section.

Programs:

A note-taking technique is an important tool to possess, especially as a dyslexic student. Notes can be done in many ways and do not have to be exclusively long closely-written texts. Notes can also be in the form of sound, drawings, or pictures.

Some programs can record lectures and teachings, so you do not have to write down every word the teacher says in order to remember it.

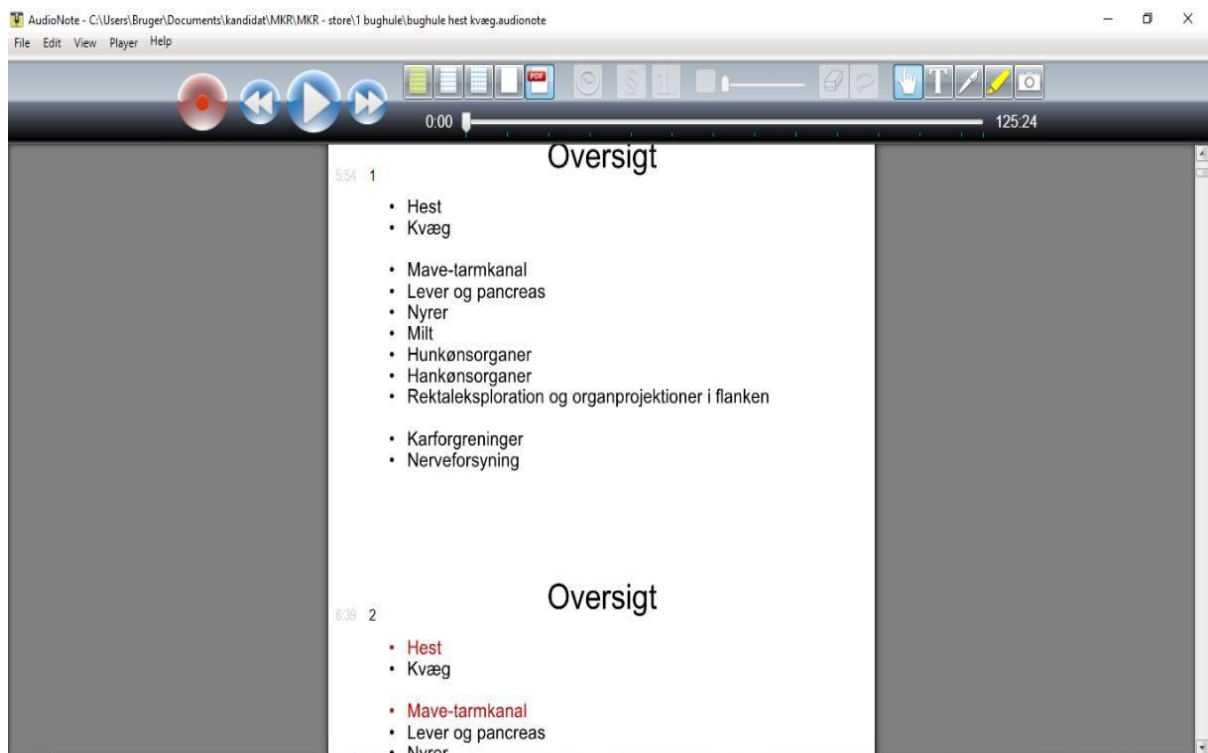
Programs such as:

- AudioNote

This program can be used on a PC or as an app available both in Appstore/iPhone and Android. Below is a picture of AudioNote with an example of notes for a slideshow.

The program can be used by writing the slide number of each slide in the slideshow or a relevant keyword for each slide. In the left corner there are 1 and 2, respectively, which indicate which slide it is. If you later want to listen to, i.e., slide number 2, just press 2 and Play.

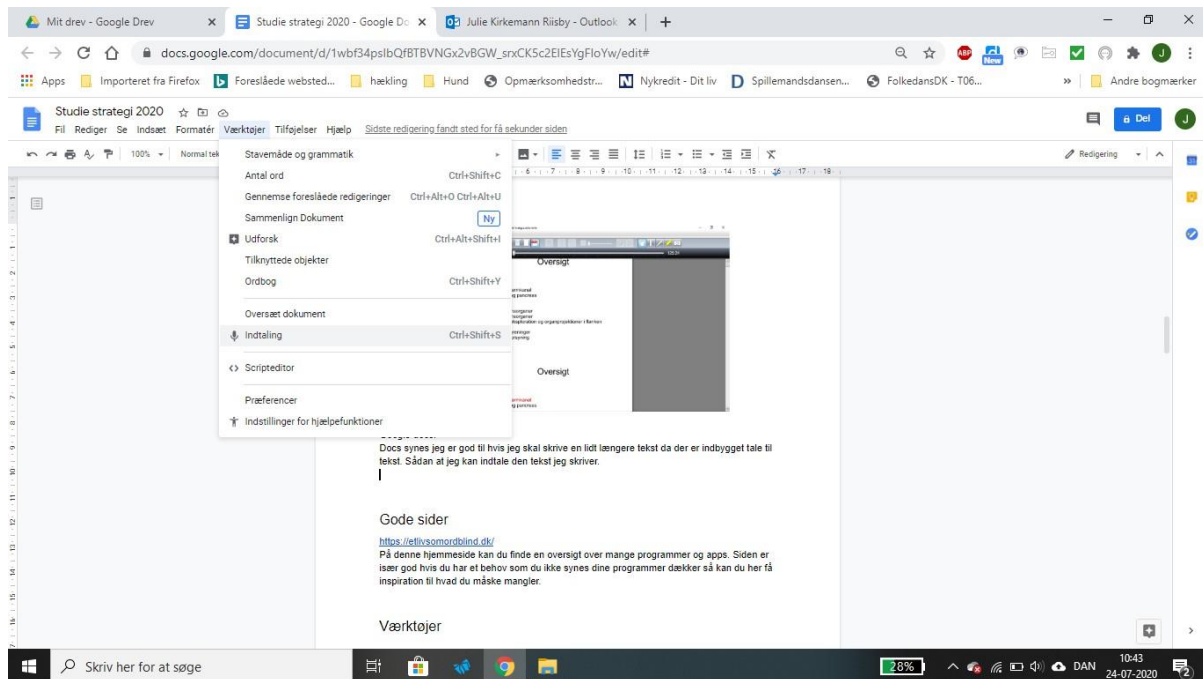
This way you avoid having to write notes during a lecture.



Google Docs

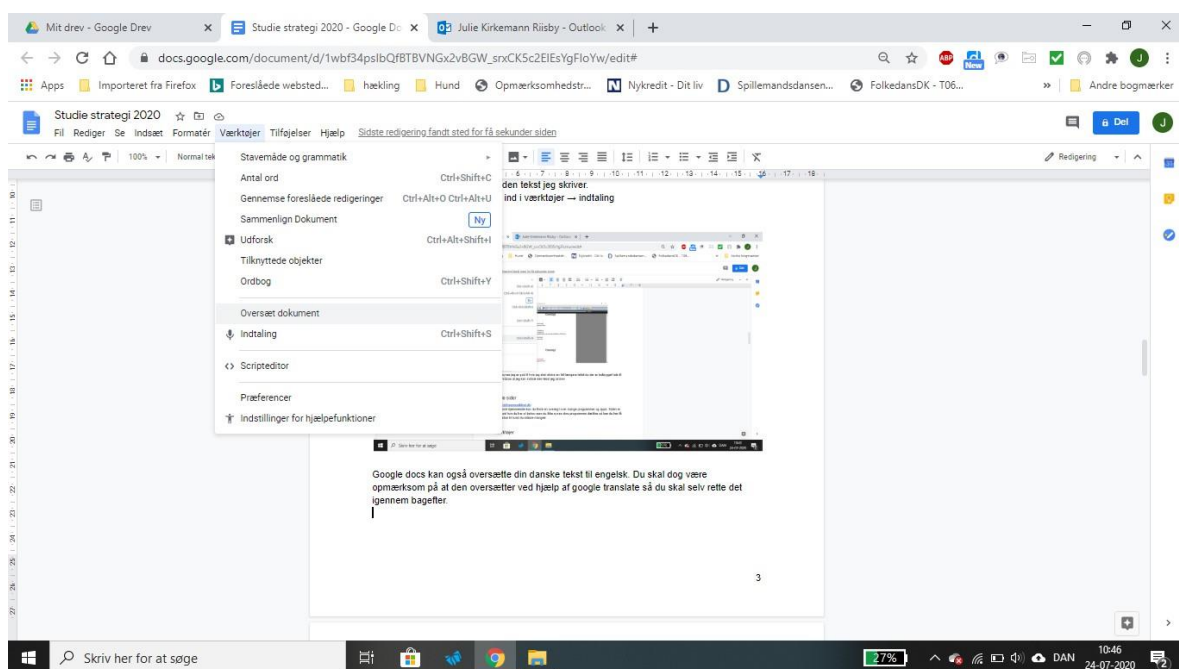
Google Docs is a good tool when writing a longer text, as there is built-in speech-to-text so you can record the text you want to write.

To find the narration function, enter tools → narration / or Ctrl + Shift + S



Google Docs can also help translate your text into the desired language. However, you should be aware that it translates using Google Translate, so you will have to proofread and correct it yourself afterward.

To access the translation feature after the text is written, enter tools → translate document.

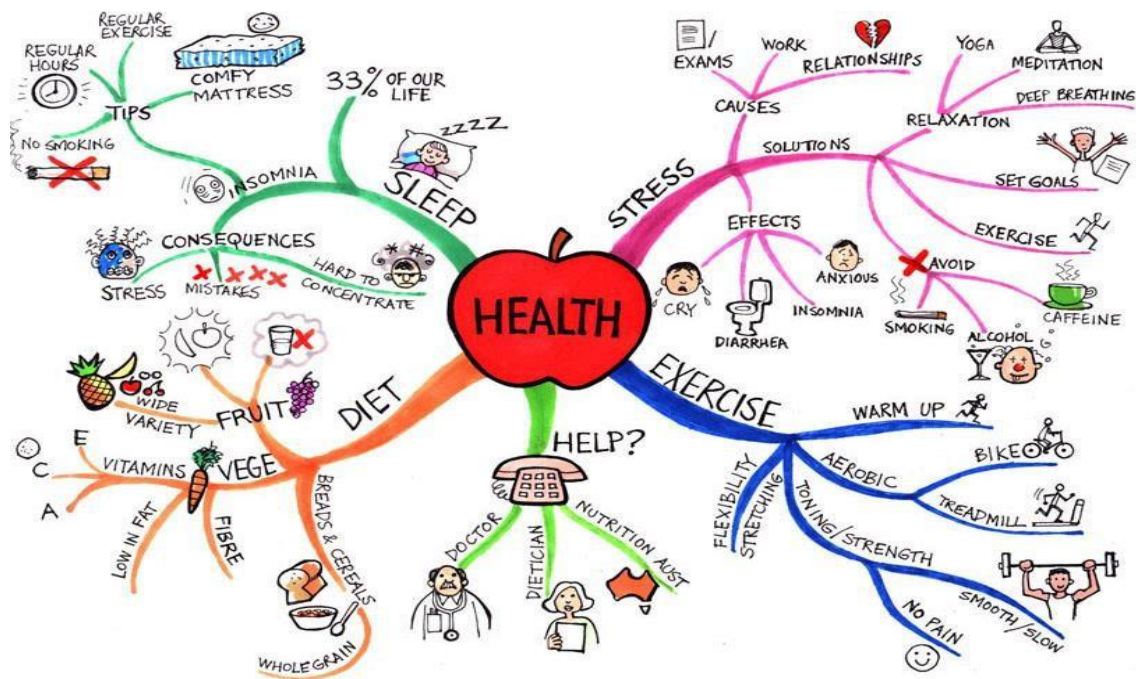


Mind map

A tool for Note-taking

Mindmap is a useful note tool for dyslexic students, as it requires very few words to describe a larger context. Sometimes you can just draw instead of writing.

See the following example:



¹When creating a mind map, you must use a new color for each “branch” as this will help stimulating your brain and separate the different branches.

- Mind map is a skill that you need to practice, but once you have found your way/style, it is a very efficient way to create a great overview and collect a lot of information on a single piece of paper
- As a rule of thumb/general rule, one lecture should be able to be on one piece of paper.

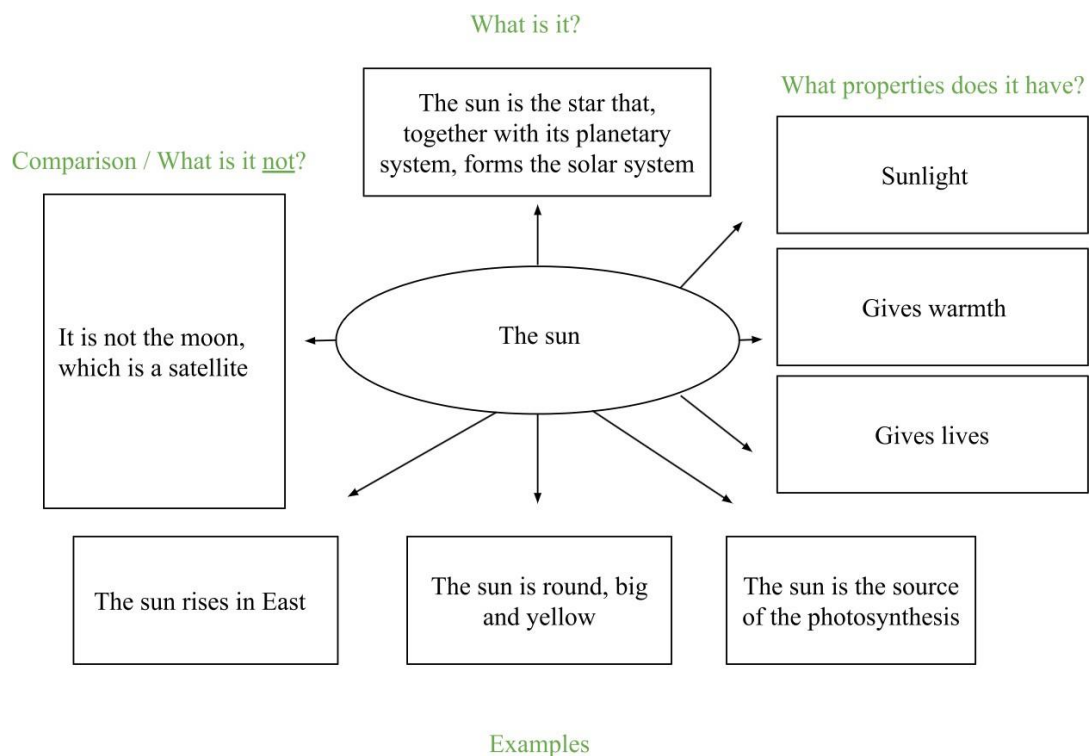
¹<https://learningfundamentals.com.au/resources/>

Concept cards

Remembering new concepts

Another note-taking technique is concept cards, which can be used especially for new concepts that are difficult to remember or understand.

See the following example.



Concept cards are a great way to distinguish two concepts that are similar to each other. For example, it can be difficult to distinguish two concepts that begin with the same initial. Here it may be a good idea to put the two concepts in their respective concept cards and then mention the opposite concept in the column called: “What is it not” to set the two concepts up against each other and separate them that way.

Memory

How is your memory?

Many dyslexics believe that they have a bad memory. However, dyslexics do not have poorer memory than everyone else, but many tend to use their memory to write and spell instead of what the memory should be used for: to remember what is important to us.

It is important as a dyslexic to understand that we draw on our memory when we read with our eyes and write with our hands. Therefore, in situations where we want to remember what

we are experiencing or what is being said, it can be an advantage for us to release some of our memory by i.e reading with our ears or having what is being said recorded.

Techniques to remember;

If you want to remember something, there are some things you can do yourself to optimize the amount you can remember:

- Be interested in the subject. It is always easier to remember something you find interesting.
- You must have the will! You must decide that you actively want to remember what the lecture or teacher narrates.
- Repetition! The most important thing in order to learn something by heart, is repetition. You have to repeat the material you want to remember at least 5 times to really learn it. It is especially here, that it is useful to have made mind maps based on the teachings, as it does not take long to go through a mind map or two a day.
- Create your own memory system. For example, if you need to remember names. Every time you meet a new person, imagine that someone you already know by the same name is behind the person you are greeting.
- It may also be that you are really sharp at numbers, and you can therefore correlate everything you need to remember to a series of numbers. You may still remember your home phone number from childhood. Try to use each number in that phone number to remember, i.e., the photosynthesis.
- It's about finding the things you are good at remembering and then using them to connect what you want to remember.

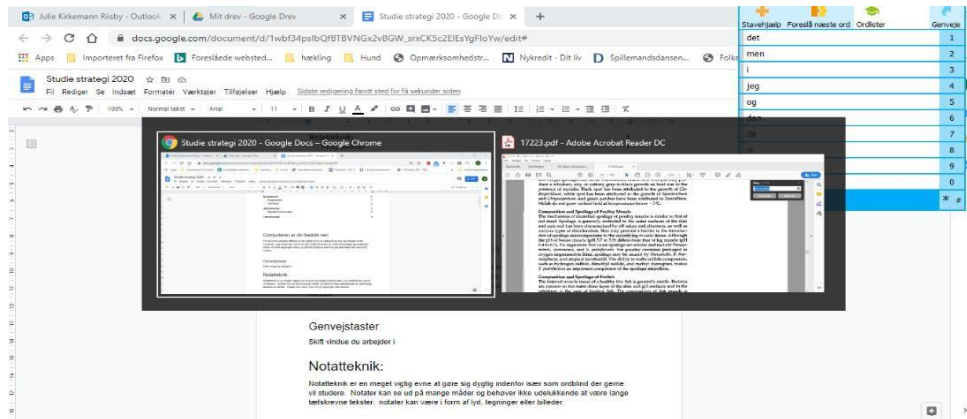
The more senses you can use when learning something you want to memorize - the better. This is also why it's a good idea with a mind map as it activates your hands and creativity, and maybe you will even find it aesthetically pleasing.

The computer is your best friend

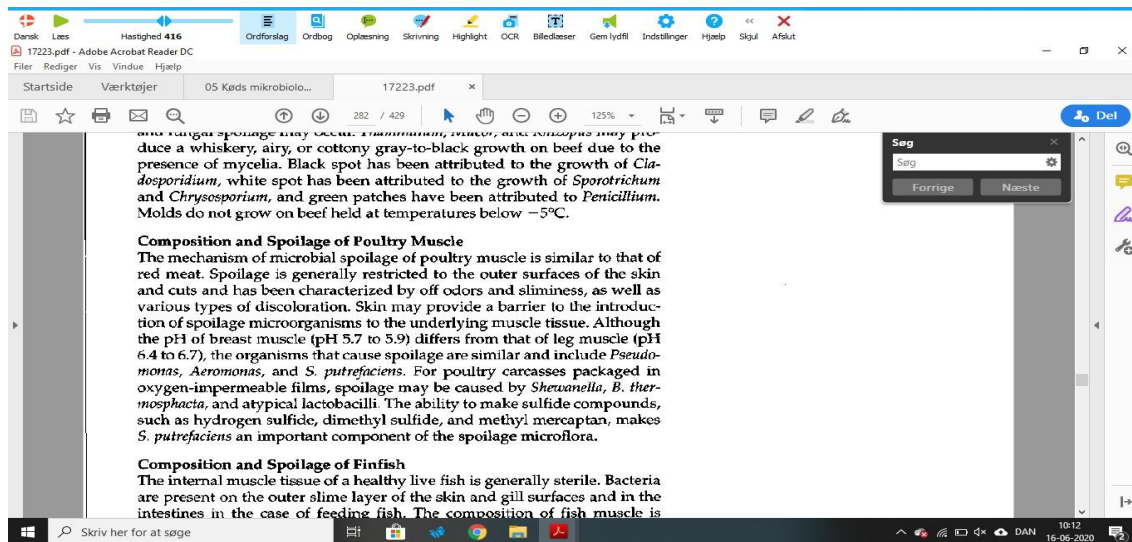
Shortcuts

To study effectively, you must be familiar with and confident in the use of your computer. It can be a great advantage to know the most common shortcut keys so that your searches go a little faster than if you constantly have to grab the mouse.

Change the tab you're working in ALT + SHIFT



Search in a text on a webpage, google docs, or PDF: CTRL + F



A small search box will appear in the upper right corner.

Type what you are looking for and click next with the mouse or ENTER.

The most common shortcut keys:

- ⇒ Search in text, written in a word: CTRL + B
- ⇒ To copy a text or word: Select the word Ctrl + C
- ⇒ To insert a text or word you have copied: Click where it should be + Ctrl + V

Useful pages

<https://www.aau.dk/uddannelser/studievejledning/vejledning/studieteknik/>

<https://spine.dk/studieteknikker/>

<https://www.ordblindhed.dk/>

On this website, you can find answers to almost all questions about dyslexia and who to contact if you have any further questions.

<https://etlivsomordblind.dk/>

This website is especially good if you have a need that you do not think your programs cover, then you can get inspiration here for what you might be missing.

If you have comments or suggestions for improvements to the guide or have knowledge of other useful study techniques for people with dyslexia, The Association will as always be happy to receive more information about this.

You can contact the association by email or phone.

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