

# Learning condition guide for Freemasons

Harness your superpower



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## Dyslexia

Words on a page may be easy for some but for others it may be daunting.

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## Autism

Delivery of ritual can come as second nature for some.

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## Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder

Keeping focus when learning ritual or in the temple can seem easy for some.



# Learning Masonic ritual with a learning condition

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## 1 Dyslexia

Words on a page may be easy to read for some, but for others it may be daunting.

Words can jump around and jumble up in order if you are dyslexic.





# Strategies for Dyslexia

Dyslexia



I struggle to read the text

I struggle to learn ritual

I struggle to recall ritual  
in a Ceremony



Dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty which primarily affects **reading** and **writing** skills. However, it does not only affect these skills.



Dyslexia affects **information processing**. Dyslexic people may have difficulty processing and remembering information they see and hear, which can affect **learning** and the **acquisition of literacy skills**. Dyslexia can also impact on other areas such as **organisational skills**.

## Signs of dyslexia in adults

- Confuse visually similar words such as dog and god.
- Spell erratically
- Find it hard to scan or skim text
- Read or write slowly
- Need to re-read paragraphs to understand them
- Find it hard to listen and maintain focus
- Find it hard to concentrate if there are distractions
- Feel sensations of mental overload or switching off

• Have difficulty telling left from right

• Get confused when given several instructions at once

• Have difficulty organising thoughts on paper

• Often forget conversations or important dates

• Have difficulty with personal organisation, time management and prioritising tasks

• Avoid certain types of work or study

• Find some tasks really easy but unexpectedly challenged by others

• Have poor self-esteem

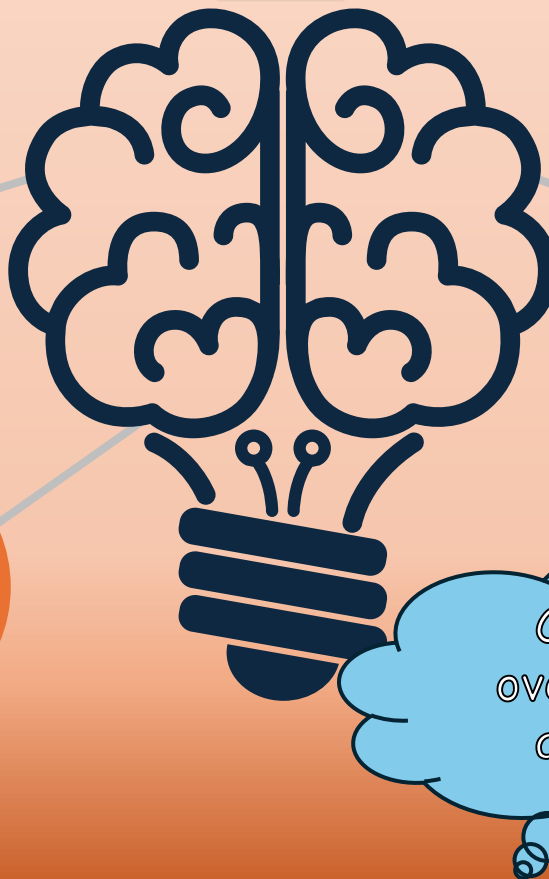


# Reading Text

Dyslexia



Home



Select a font

Colour

Voice over

Coloured overlays can also help

Print the text you are reading in a dyslexic friendly font such as Ariel or Comic Sans.

Change the size of the font. Sometimes larger fonts are easier to read.

Change the font colour. Like the background some colours can be easier to read.

Using the read aloud option in **MS Word** can help as the program reads for you. Other apps such as **Speechify** are also available that do this.

Changing the colour of the Background can sharpen the text. See which colours combinations work for you below.

Here is white on blue

Here is white on green

Here is white on red

Here is yellow on blue

Here is black on blue

Here is black on green



Learning ritual is tricky for most masons, whether dyslexic or not.

Try to **minimise distractions** when learning ritual. Turn off tech and find a quiet space.

Making your learning as **multi-sensory** as possible gives your brain the best chance to retain what you learn. Learn by **seeing** (visual) **listening** (aural) or **speaking** out (verbal)

Here are some top tips in how to learn in a visual, aural and verbal way when learning ritual.

Visual



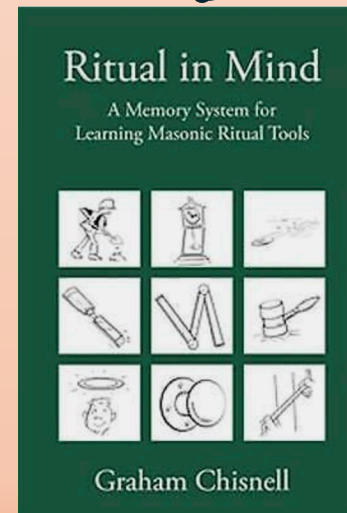
**Draw images** of important information, by turning information into pictures your brain links the text with an image and finds it easier to remember.

**Highlight key passages** in a different colours.

Stick **post-its** where you will see them e.g. by the sink so you read them whilst brushing your teeth.

**Write out sentences** you are learning on flash cards and pop them in your wallet. Look at them often until that phrase has sunk in.

Here is a great book that uses images to help you learn the working tools





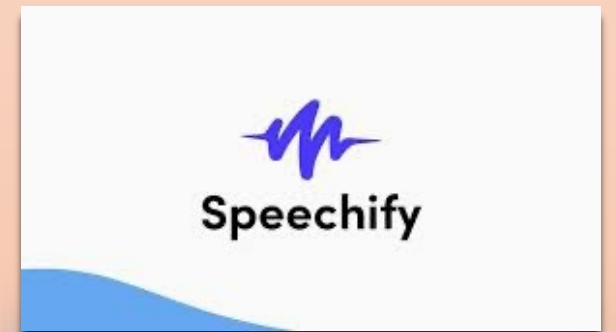
Aural



Use a recording device or app to record short pieces of ritual you are learning. By **listening to your own voice**, your brain takes in more instruction.

**Slow down**, when recording your voice, speak slowly, this will give your brain time to think when you are listening back.

You can use an app such as **Speechify** or MSWord's **read aloud** option (in the Review tab) to read the text to you.





## Verbal



When learning ritual, always **think of the story**. The act of understanding the structure and then explaining this to someone else can help with your own understanding and ability to remember.

**Speak along with your recorded voice**. Then repeat the line you are learning ten times without the voice recording. Keep the **pace steady**.

**Sing the ritual** you are learning, sometimes putting a rhythm or song to the ritual makes it stick more easily. This is a great strategy if you readily remember song lyrics.

**Attend Loi** - practicing your ritual in front of brethren in a more relaxed state in Loi can really help prepare you for the meeting.



## In the Lodge room

**Breathe** - steady your breathing and you steady your mind. This helps you to keep a good pace to delivering your ritual.

Speak with a **steady pace**. You don't need to rush your delivery. By speaking in a steady pace, you give your brain time to think about what is coming next.

Think about the **geography**. As you wait to deliver your ritual, think about where and when this will take place so you are ready for the prompt to start your piece.



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## Autism

Delivery of ritual can come as second nature for some.





# Autism

Autism is a spectrum condition and affects people in different ways. Like all people, autistic people have their own strengths and weaknesses. Below is a list of difficulties autistic people may share, including the two key difficulties required for a diagnosis.

[Here is a link to a short video on autism](#)

This can include:

- [Social communication and social interaction challenges](#)
- Repetitive and restrictive behaviour
- Over or under sensitivity to light, taste or touch
- Highly focussed interests or hobbies
- Extreme anxiety
- Meltdowns and shutdowns

## Social Communication



Autistic brethren can find it hard to interpret verbal and non-verbal language like **gestures** or **tone of voice**. Other challenges include:

- taking things literally and not understanding abstract concepts
- needing extra time to process information or answer questions
- repeating what others say to them (this is called echolalia)

## Social interaction



Autistic brethren often find it hard to **read people's feelings** or **emotions**. They may:

- appear to be insensitive
- seek out time alone when overloaded by other people
- not seek comfort from other people
- appear to behave 'strangely' or in a way thought to be socially inappropriate
- find it hard to form friendships.
- Character strengths such as honesty and loyalty



# Strategies for autistic Brethren

- **Speak to your DC** and explain your preferred approach to learning.
- Explain that you like to see **things done right and follow the right routines**. Also, that you can be agitated when this is not the case.
- Learn ritual in a **systematic way**, this reduces the feeling of becoming overwhelmed.
- Connect with a **Lodge mentor or personal mentor** who understands your autism and can be a support in the temple.
- **Learn the protocols** for speaking in lodge and making toasts at Festive Board so there are no surprises.
- Let your personal mentor know how to **spot the signs you display** when you become agitated so they can best support you.

# Learning Masonic ritual with a learning condition

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## Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder

Keeping focus when learning ritual or in the temple can seem easy for some.





# Attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

ADHD can affect the ability to focus, pay attention, listen, or put effort into schoolwork.

ADHD also can make you fidgety, restless, talk too much, or be disruptive.

## Inattentiveness

(difficulty concentrating and focusing)

The main signs of inattentiveness are:

- having a **short attention span** and being easily distracted
- making **careless mistakes**
- appearing **forgetful** or **losing things**
- being unable to **stick to tasks** that are **tedious** or **time-consuming**
- appearing to be **unable to listen** to or carry out instructions
- constantly changing activity** or task
- having difficulty **organising tasks**

## Hyperactivity and impulsiveness



The main signs of hyperactivity and impulsiveness are:

- being **unable to sit still**, especially in calm or quiet surroundings
- constantly fidgeting**
- being **unable to concentrate** on tasks
- excessive physical movement**
- excessive talking**
- being **unable to wait their turn**
- acting without thinking**
- interrupting conversations**
- little or no **sense of danger**

# Strategies for ADHD when learning ritual



- Think of **the story in the ritual** to give the learning purpose. This helps you to sequence and make sense of what you learn.



- **Activate the brain** - Prepare by thinking through what is already known about the ritual and ceremony you are learning.



- **Think through the movements** linked to the ritual you are learning. When you learn, walk it through so you get used to the movements that you will need to undertake in the temple.



- **Walk and read** at the same time if it is safe to do so. The movement helps to keep your focus, it's a little like focusing your fidgeting.



- When learning ritual, **speak it out loud**.



- Try **different colour paper** when reading text, like dyslexia, sometimes black text on white paper is not as easy to read.



- Use **post it notes** or **flash cards** to write short sections of ritual being learned. Master short pieces before moving on.



## Strategies for ADHD in the Lodge room



Do something **physical** before the meeting, this will help to settle you in the meeting.



Carefully select **where you sit**. Try to sit where you have the best view of the ceremony, helping to keep distractions to a minimum. Try to maintain eye contact with the brethren speaking.



Eat **protein rich food** like nuts, cheese and meat or a protein shake can support.



Speak to your **personal mentor** to keep you from losing focus.



**Don't suppress your desire to fidget**. Fidgeting with a pen, paper clip or cufflink can help your focus. This may be distracting to others so **be subtle**. Fidgeting stimulates your brain activity and increases your focus.