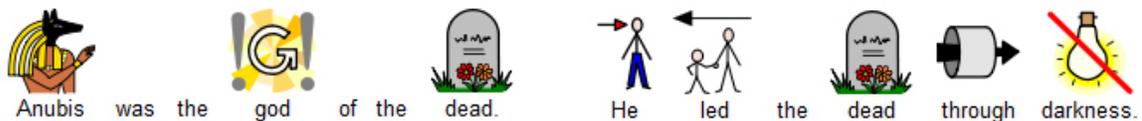# Graphic support for text

Many dyslexic children, who have dyslexia, struggle in education. Having a reading difficulty affects the ease with which students can access reading materials, worksheets, and affects how they can display their knowledge. As a result many students become frustrated and demotivated.
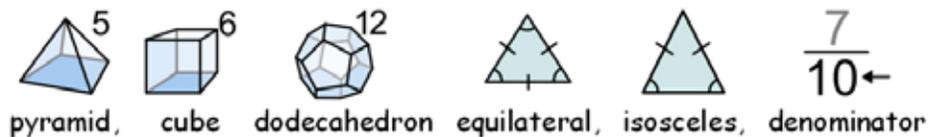
The literacy problems affect learning in all subjects because much of education relies on reading and writing.

Symbols, which illustrate the meaning of words, can help clue the reader into the meaning of text. This doesn't solve the problem of decoding the text, but it does help the reader to understand what the word means.

Anubis   was   the   god   of   the   dead.   He   led   the   dead   through   darkness.

Initially, symbols were used to help people who were not able to read because of cognitive difficulties. However, in recent years symbols have been used with many groups who have no cognitive problems but still experience difficulty with text.

The Symbols Inclusion Project has been exploring how symbols can help many children with reading and comprehension difficulties. Children gain more independence in their learning through having symbols. This has led to significant improvements in motivation and behavior. For example, there are symbols for all of the maths vocabulary for years 1 to 6. Many children can understand the mathematical concepts but not the language of maths. Symbols help to cut through that. Under this project, a large number of supported learning materials have been made for primary pupils.

pyramid,   cube   dodecahedron   equilateral,   isosceles,   denominator

There are a number of ways symbols are used:
- Vocabulary lists, providing a printed list of the target words with the symbols beside them

- Symbol supported reading material or worksheets, including graphic support for new or difficult vocabulary
- Using symbol software so that the writer can see the meaning of the word typed. This helps especially with homophones and confusable words
- Visual timetables, clear visual clues to what is happening and what is expected, increasing self-confidence and independence
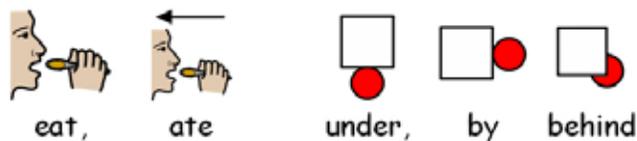- Labels and prompts, simple improvements to the environment to make life that bit easier

How easy is it to understand symbols?

The majority of symbols are easily recognisible, and require no learning. Other symbols will need to be learned. Widgit Symbols are one of the most commonly used symbol sets. They have a strong schematic structure or set of visual rules, so that a reader can quickly work out what a new symbol might mean.

For example:

book   library   shop   book shop   librarian   shop assistant

Other symbols will be understood as the user becomes familiar with the schema.

eat,   ate   under,   by   behind

And illustrating confusables

here   hear   sure   shore   there   their

When used to support Dyslexia, symbols will usually only be needed for a period of time, acting as a bridge to learning while other strategies can be developed. Importantly they help children engage in learning alongside their peers, and allow them to show their knowledge and understanding independently of their literacy acquisition.

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Further points about Widgit Symbols on BDA tech pages.

Clicker Word and PDF files.

Clicker provides differentiated levels of support. Primary school pupils, those learning English or with limited literacy skills can use the picture library or Widgit symbols to link words, spellings and meanings.

Apps page

Scene & Heard app can incorporate Widgit Symbols in interactive scenes.

Transferred from Learning Roundup (now deleted).

Users of Widgit symbols will be interested to hear of the release of Point an online symbol support tool. Enabled webs allow visitors to access text based information through the use of Widgit Symbols.

Speech Recognition page.

Dragon Naturally Speaking can be used in word-processors, E-mail, spreadsheets and practically anywhere, including Widgit Symbols and Crick Clicker.