



Music Dyslexia
Musical Access Support

Could music mask dyslexia?

CHECKLIST

By Alicia Johnson



Following a study into whether music might mask dyslexia, Alicia Johnson (Music Dyslexia) has created this Music Checklist to use in SpLD Assessments. **Why?** Frith (1999) highlights that in favourable circumstances, traits of dyslexia do not manifest in the expected ways. This is reinforced by the Delphi study (Carroll et al., 2024). The literature shows that **music training from a young age impacts on demonstrations of dyslexia** (e.g., Flauecco et al., 2015; Overy et al., 2003; Weiss, Granot and Ahissar, 2014; Zuk et al., 2017). **Musical training has been shown to enhance cognitive skills that are measured in dyslexia assessments**, including phonological awareness, working memory and reading fluency. This can be explained by brain plasticity. **Musical literacy has far transfer effects to reading skills due to the necessary interpretation of symbol to sound** (Dunbar and Cooper, 2020). Music training can include playing an instrument, singing, having lessons, or no formal instruction. Neuroscience tells us that brain plasticity in music training only occurs where the individual is truly engaged (Patel, 2011; 2014).

Add the following to your background questions. They can be adapted to suit the individual. Answers to these questions may provide explanations as to **why some cognitive scores are higher than expected**. If only a little musical training occurred, music is not likely to have had an influence. The individual must have enjoyed their music lessons in order for music to be influential in enhancing their scores. Report on these findings in the background information under educational history.

- At what age did you start music lessons? _____
- Which instruments do you/ did you play? (including voice) _____
- Did you join musical groups/ensembles/ orchestras? _____
- How often did you practice or attend rehearsals? _____
- Do you still play? If not, how long did you play for? _____
- Did you enjoy your music lessons? _____
- Did you complete any grades on your instrument(s)? _____
- Did you complete any grades in music theory? _____
- Can you identify any strategies that you might have used of school as a result of your musical training? _____

