

What is Dyslexia?

Dyslexia is defined as a learning difference that affects skills involved in reading, spelling, and writing.

While there is still a lot of information that we have yet to learn about Dyslexia, we do know that it is more common than people realize, with ~20% of our population having characteristics that align with a Dyslexia diagnosis. Dyslexia is a continuum of differences, where although we see similar patterns of strengths and difficulties across individuals, there is variation between how Dyslexia presents itself between individuals who have the diagnosis.

Common Characteristics

- Difficulty with recognizing letters
- Difficulty rhyming
- Difficulty with remembering letter sounds
- Difficulty with recognizing numbers
- Difficulty with picking up early reading skills
- Difficulty with early drawing and handwriting skills (letter/shape formation)
- Slow to add new vocabulary
- Letter reversals
- Reads slowly with little fluency
- May be highly creative but dislikes direct academic work
- For older children, difficulty with reading comprehension due to effort required for decoding
- Genetic history of dyslexia in the family
- Resistance to school

Early Intervention

It is important for Dyslexia to be identified as early as possible, so that the appropriate intervention can be provided. When Dyslexia goes unidentified, children may experience secondary complications such as low self-esteem, negative self talk, or anxiety related to the challenges that they face. When Dyslexia is identified early, adults are able to teach their child about the amazing differences and strengths that their creative brains possess. The focus can be shifted to the child's areas of strengths and talents while simultaneously providing "direct, explicit, multisensory, structured, sequential, diagnostic, and prescriptive ways" of teaching literacy when reading, writing, and spelling does not come easily to them.

Neurological Wiring

Dyslexia is an often misunderstood difference in a person's neurological wiring. This neurological difference often results in characteristics that provide people with dyslexia both brilliant success in areas involving creativity, problem solving, visual spatial and pattern recognition, and simultaneously can interfere with a person's ability to develop accurate and/or fluent word recognition and foundational skills needed to read, spell, and write.



What dyslexia looks like by grade level

Pre-K

- Difficulty with learning and remembering names of letters and trouble with sounds and corresponding symbols
- Sight words more difficult to learn
- Some have a history of early language delay
- Difficulty with phonological awareness skills, or manipulating sounds:
 - Words in a sentence - “How many words are in ‘I have a blue car’”
 - Difficulty breaking words into syllables:
 - Blending compound words (“Put together rain...bow”)
 - Segmenting compound words (“Take apart hotdog”)
 - How many syllables? (“How many syllables are in piano?”)
 - Difficulty Rhyming
 - Identify whether words rhyme (“Do big and rig rhyme?”)
 - Producing a rhyme for the given word (“Tell me a rhyming word for pit”)

Kindergarten

- Struggle with skills mentioned in Pre-K level
- May be able to recognize sight word in a text on one line, but then do not recognize the same word on the second line
- Handwriting less legible than peers and difficulty recalling letter formation, frequent reversals
- May have an awkward pencil grasp
- May have math concept difficulties
- May begin to have an emotional impact due to the stress of mismatched ability with academic demands in misaligned instruction..

Grades 1-2

- Reading & handwriting confusion, fatigue, frustration, embarrassment anxiety, reluctance
- Continue to sound out words they should be able to recognize instantly
- Begin to realize they are behind their peers
- b/d confusion persists
- Omits words in writing and letters in spelling

Grades 3-12

- A marked difference in 3rd grade is that kids are now expected to read. In Pre-K through 2nd grade, kids are “learning to read”. Starting in 3rd grade, kids are “reading to learn.”
- Often known as reluctant readers
- Sounds out words that should be recognized instantly
- Omissions, substitutions, transpositions
- Slow deliberate reading or fast scrabled reading
- Continued b/d confusion
- Dropping/Adding/Skipping/ Substituting syllables in multi-syllabic words
- Poor recognition of base words
- Weak error detection or high number of self-corrections
- Issues with prosody
- Trouble spelling simple words
- Issues with math concepts- telling time, multiplication tables, word problems
- Reading comprehension is poor relative to listening comprehension
- Difficulty organizing ideas for written expression
- Tells stories in a spiral

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