

Warning Signs of Dyslexia

The International Dyslexia Association (IDA) defines dyslexia as follows:

“Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede the growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.”

General Warning Signs:

- ✓ Appears bright, highly intelligent and articulate, but unable to read, write, or spell at grade level. (Many gifted children are also dyslexic)
- ✓ Teachers may say the child is “lazy” or “not trying hard enough” despite spending several hours on homework each week.
- ✓ Isn’t “behind enough” to qualify for additional help through the school district.
- ✓ Talented in art, drama, music, sports, mechanics, story-telling, designing, building, etc. (Dyslexic children are right brained dominant)
- ✓ Seems to “zone out” or daydream often; gets lost easily or loses track of time. (Many children with dyslexia also have ADHD.)
- ✓ Complains of stomach aches or headaches while reading.
- ✓ Learns best through hands-on experiences, demonstrations, experiments and visual aids.
- ✓ Excellent long-term memory for experiences, locations, and faces.
- ✓ Poor memory for sequences, facts, and information.
- ✓ Thinks primarily with images and feelings.
- ✓ Extremely disorderly or compulsively orderly.
- ✓ Can be class clown, trouble-maker, or too quiet.
- ✓ Has unusually early or late developmental stages (talking, crawling, walking, tying shoes)
- ✓ Strong sense of justice; emotionally sensitive, strives for perfection.
- ✓ Mistakes and symptoms increase dramatically with confusion, time pressure, or emotional stress.
- ✓ Can be extra deep or light sleeper; bedwetting may continue beyond appropriate age.

Early Childhood Warning Signs:

- ✓ Delayed speech
- ✓ Mixing up sounds/syllables in long words
- ✓ Trouble recalling words/ names
- ✓ Rhyming words is difficult
- ✓ Chronic ear infections
- ✓ Late establishing a dominant hand
- ✓ Trouble memorizing their phone number, address, and/or the alphabet
- ✓ A close relative with dyslexia
- ✓ Late bedwetting

School Age Warning Signs:

- ✓ Dysgraphia: Trouble with the act of handwriting. The child's handwriting will appear very sloppy and difficult to read. (May have an unusual pencil grip.)
- ✓ Copying from the board is a long, tedious task
- ✓ Letter/number reversals continuing past the end of 1st grade
- ✓ Confused by letters, numbers, words, and sequences such as phone numbers or the alphabet
- ✓ Terrible spelling
- ✓ Slow, choppy, inaccurate reading:
 - skips or misreads prepositions (at, to, of)
 - difficulty sounding out words
 - ignores suffixes (__ing, __ed, ___s,)
 - makes substitutions
- ✓ Difficulty telling time on a clock with hands, managing time, learning to sequence information or tasks, or being on time.
- ✓ Difficulty with counting money and making change.
- ✓ Trouble with math facts and computation. Seems to rely on finger counting and other tricks to solve easy problems
- ✓ Extremely messy bedroom, backpack, desk, or locker
- ✓ May have difficulty putting thoughts into words. (Speaks in halting phrases, leaves sentences incomplete, and mispronounces long words or syllables when speaking).
- ✓ Clumsy, uncoordinated, poor at ball or team sports; difficulties with fine and/or gross motor skills; prone to motion-sickness
- ✓ Often confuses left/right, over/under

If you have a child who is somewhat behind in reading, you may have heard some of the following myths.

1. **If you just keep reading aloud to your child, they will catch on.** Reading out loud to your child will create a love of books and stories. It can also be used to teach comprehension skills. It does not however give your child the tools that are necessary to learn decoding. The National Reading Panel has stated that children must have systematic instruction in both phonemic awareness (the awareness of sounds), and phonics.
2. **IQ and reading difficulties are closely related.** This is simply not true! In fact, in order to have a diagnosis of dyslexia, your child must have an average to above average IQ. Many children who struggle with reading are extremely intelligent and thus are very frustrated when they cannot catch on to reading.
3. **Practice always makes perfect.** This is true if your child is practicing the correct skill. So often we have our children practicing on a skill that they are not ready for. For example, I see many parents and teachers working on fluency with a child who struggles with the more foundational skills of phonemic awareness and phonics. Fluency is the highest skill in the reading pyramid, and it is imperative that the more foundational skills are covered first.
4. **One-size fits all.** This is definitely a myth! While there are many great reading curriculums out there, it is imperative that we find the root cause of child's reading difficulty before we decide on the curriculum. If the child is struggling with phonemic awareness and phonics, we know that there is an auditory processing deficit. If they are skipping words on the page, inserting letters, and/or flipping letters while reading, we know that it is a visual processing difficulty. If a child struggles to remember what he/she has read, struggles with writing, and has difficulties with tests, we know that this is a language processing problem. Different curriculums and

programs work on different brain functions. It is important to use the right curriculum that will intervene with the deficit at hand.

5. **Your child will outgrow the reading difficulty.** Children do not outgrow reading problems...they adjust to them. Small children will memorize text, older children will listen more intently so that they don't have to read. Some will laboriously push through their reading assignments, but it is long and tedious for them. It is very important to find the root cause of a reading difficulty and then treat it with the correct intervention.