



EDUCATIONAL DYSLLEXIA INSTRUCTION



DISCOVERING DYSLLEXIA

A Parent's Guide to Understanding Dyslexia

**Dyslexia is not a reflection of intelligence, effort, or potential.
It is a specific learning disability involving differences in how the brain develops and
processes written language.**

Educational Dyslexia Instruction is committed to helping families understand dyslexia through compassionate, research-informed education and evidence-based reading instruction.

UNLEASHING BRILLIANCE, ONE MIND AT A TIME

What Is Dyslexia?

Dys = difficulty Lexia = language or words

Dyslexia is a **specific learning disability** that primarily affects word reading and/or spelling, including accuracy and speed. It is neurobiological in origin and reflects differences in the way the brain processes written language. Dyslexia is **not caused by low intelligence, laziness, lack of motivation, or poor vision**.

A common area of difficulty involves **phonological processing**—working with the sounds of spoken language. These difficulties can make it harder to connect speech sounds with letters and spelling patterns, decode unfamiliar words, develop automatic word recognition, and spell accurately. Phonological difficulties are common in dyslexia, although current research recognizes that they are not the only factor involved.

Important: Dyslexia and intelligence are separate. A person can have dyslexia at any level of intellectual ability, including average, above-average, or gifted intellectual ability.

What Happens in the Brain?

Brain-imaging and developmental research show differences in the networks involved in reading and language processing for many individuals with dyslexia. These findings support the understanding of dyslexia as a brain-based learning difference. They do **not** mean that a person's brain is damaged or that the person cannot learn to read.

Why Does Reading Feel So Hard?

Reading requires the brain to coordinate speech sounds, letters, spelling patterns, word recognition, language, and meaning. When these processes do not become automatic in the expected way, reading can remain slow, effortful, or inaccurate even when a student is bright, motivated, and trying very hard.

There is a reason for the struggle.
Understanding dyslexia can replace “Why won't my child read?” with the more useful question: “What does this reader need in order to learn?”

Why Does Dyslexia Happen?

There is no single cause of dyslexia. Current research points to a complex interaction of **genetic, neurobiological, developmental, and environmental influences**.

Factors Associated With Increased Risk

- **Family history:** Dyslexia frequently runs in families.
- **Genetic influences:** Multiple genetic factors are associated with reading and language development.
- **Premature birth:** Preterm birth is associated with increased risk for developmental reading difficulties.
- **Low birth weight:** Low birth weight is another developmental risk factor associated with later learning difficulties.
- **Brain development:** Research identifies differences in the development and functioning of brain networks involved in reading.

Strengths You May See in a Person With Dyslexia

Dyslexia does **not** automatically give someone special talents. However, some individuals with dyslexia demonstrate strengths in areas such as creativity, problem solving, reasoning, and big-picture thinking. These strengths vary greatly from person to person and should never be used to diagnose dyslexia.

- Creative or out-of-the-box thinking
- Problem solving and reasoning
- Big-picture thinking
- Strong imagination
- Observational skills
- Strong oral communication or general knowledge
- Artistic, musical, athletic, or design-related interests
- Empathy and social awareness

Look beyond the reading difficulty.

A child who struggles to read may still be highly capable, curious, funny, imaginative, athletic, artistic, analytical, or exceptionally knowledgeable. Reading difficulty should never become a measure of a child's worth or intelligence.

Dyslexia Myths vs. Facts

Misinformation about dyslexia can delay identification and make children feel misunderstood. Here are some common myths:

MYTH

"People with dyslexia see letters backwards."

FACT

Dyslexia is not a vision disorder. Most people with dyslexia see letters normally. The difficulty is primarily in processing written language, including efficiently connecting letters and spelling patterns with speech sounds. Letter reversals can occur in early development and are not, by themselves, a sign of dyslexia.

MYTH

"People with dyslexia will never learn to read."

FACT

Dyslexia does not prevent literacy. With explicit, systematic, cumulative, and evidence-based instruction, individuals with dyslexia can learn to read successfully. Some may continue to read more slowly or with greater effort than peers, but successful reading is possible.

MYTH

"People with dyslexia are not smart."

FACT

Dyslexia is not a measure of intelligence. People with dyslexia can have average, above-average, or gifted intellectual abilities. Reading skill and intellectual ability are not the same thing.

MYTH

"Dyslexia is rare."

FACT

Dyslexia is common. Estimates vary depending on how dyslexia is defined and measured, but major literacy organizations commonly cite approximately 15–20% of the population as experiencing symptoms consistent with dyslexia or language-based learning difficulties.

MYTH

"You have to wait until third grade to identify dyslexia."

FACT

You do not need to wait. Early warning signs can be identified in preschool and early elementary years, particularly when there is a family history or difficulty with speech/language, rhyming, letter-sound connections, or early reading skills. Early screening, evaluation, and targeted instruction are encouraged when concerns arise.

Early Identification Matters

One of the most important messages for families is simple: **do not wait for a child to fail before seeking help.**

Research and professional guidance support early screening, evaluation, and evidence-based intervention for children who show risk factors or persistent difficulty with reading. Early support can reduce the amount of time a child spends struggling without the instruction they need.

**Early support is not “jumping the gun.”
It is responding to evidence. A child does not have to reach third grade before adults
take persistent reading difficulty seriously.**

A Message of Hope

A dyslexia identification is not a prediction of failure. It is an opportunity to understand how a learner processes language and to provide instruction that matches that learner's needs.

With appropriate instruction, consistent practice, knowledgeable support, and time, individuals with dyslexia can make meaningful progress and develop strong literacy skills. Dyslexia may change the path to reading—but it does not determine a person's potential.

**When we understand the “why,” we can provide the “how.”
The goal is not to lower expectations. The goal is to give the learner the instruction
needed to reach them.**

Evidence-Based Sources & Further Reading

International Dyslexia Association — 2025/2026 Definition of Dyslexia
<https://dyslexiaida.org/2026-definition-of-dyslexia/>

National Center on Improving Literacy — Defining Dyslexia
<https://improvingliteracy.org/resource/defining-dyslexia/>

National Center on Improving Literacy — Understanding Dyslexia: Myths vs. Facts
<https://improvingliteracy.org/resource/understanding-dyslexia-myth-vs-facts/>

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development — What Causes Reading Disorders?
<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/reading/conditioninfo/causes>

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development — What Is the Best Way to Teach Children to Read?
<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/reading/conditioninfo/teach>

American Academy of Pediatrics — Learning Disabilities, Dyslexia, and Vision
<https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/127/3/e818/64947/Learning-Disabilities-Dyslexia-and-Vision>

This guide is educational information and is not a diagnostic evaluation or a substitute for individualized assessment. Dyslexia presents differently from person to person, and identification should consider multiple sources of information.