

# Dyslexia

## Definition:

According to the U.S. National Institutes of Health, dyslexia is a learning disability that can hinder a person's ability to read, write, spell, and sometimes speak.

## Description:

- Dyslexia is the most common learning disability in children and persists throughout life.
- The severity of dyslexia can vary from mild to severe.
- The sooner dyslexia is treated, the more favorable the outcome; however, it is never too late for people with dyslexia to learn to improve their language skills.
- Children with dyslexia have difficulty in learning to read despite traditional instruction, at least average intelligence, and an adequate opportunity to learn.
- Dyslexia is caused by impairment in the brain's ability to translate images received from the eyes or ears into understandable language.
- Dyslexia can go undetected in the early grades of schooling. The child can become frustrated by difficulty in learning to read, and other problems can arise that disguise dyslexia.

## Characteristics:

### *Dyslexia may affect several different functions:*

- Visual dyslexia is characterized by number and letter reversals and the inability to write symbols in the correct sequence.
- Auditory dyslexia involves difficulty with sounds of letters or groups of letters. The sounds are perceived as jumbled or not heard correctly.
- "Dysgraphia" refers to the child's difficulty holding and controlling a pencil so that the correct markings can be made on the paper.
- Letter and number reversals are the most common warning sign. Such reversals are fairly common up to the age of 7 or 8 and usually diminish by that time. If they do not, it may be appropriate to test for dyslexia or other learning problems.
- Difficulty copying from the board or a book can also suggest problems. There may be a general disorganization of written work. A child may not be able to remember content, even if it involves a favorite video or storybook.
- Problems with spatial relationships can extend beyond the classroom and be observed on the playground. The child may appear to be uncoordinated and have difficulty with organized sports or games.
- Difficulty with left and right is common, and often dominance for either hand has not been established.
- In the early grades, music and dance are often used to enhance academic learning. Children with dyslexia can have difficulty moving to the rhythm of the music.
- Auditory problems in dyslexia encompass a variety of functions. Commonly, a child may have difficulty remembering or understanding what he hears. Recalling sequences of things or more than one command at a time can be difficult. Parts of words or parts of whole sentences may be missed, and words can come out sounding funny. The wrong word or a similar word may be used instead. Children struggling with this problem may know what they want to say but have trouble finding the actual words to express their thoughts.

**Many subtle signs can be observed in children with dyslexia.**

- Children may become withdrawn and appear to be depressed.
- They may begin to act out, drawing attention away from their learning difficulty.
- Problems with self-esteem can arise, and peer and sibling interactions can become strained. These children may lose their interest in school-related activities and appear to be unmotivated or lazy. The emotional symptoms and signs are just as important as the academic and require equal attention.

**Causes:**

There are several types of dyslexia that can affect the child's ability to spell as well as read.

- **Trauma dyslexia** usually occurs after some form of brain trauma or injury to the area of the brain that controls reading and writing. It is rarely seen in today's school-age population.
- **Primary dyslexia** is a dysfunction of, rather than damage to, the left side of the brain (cerebral cortex) and does not change with age. Individuals with this type are rarely able to read above a fourth-grade level and may struggle with reading, spelling, and writing as adults. Primary dyslexia is passed in family lines through their genes (hereditary). It is found more often in boys than in girls.
- **Secondary or developmental dyslexia** is felt to be caused by hormonal development during the early stages of fetal development. Developmental dyslexia diminishes as the child matures. It is also more common in boys.

**Resources:**

**Books for Parents:**

- Marshall, Abigail. *The Everything Parent's Guide to Children with Dyslexia: All You Need to Ensure Your Child's Success*. Avon, MA: Adams Media, 2004.
- Shaywitz, Sally E. *Overcoming Dyslexia: a New and Complete Science-based Program for Reading Problems at Any Level*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003.
- Davis, Ronald D., and Eldon M. Braun. *The Gift of Dyslexia: Why Some of the Smartest People Can't Read- and How They Can Learn*. New York, NY: Penguin Group, 2010.
- *The Dyslexic Advantage Unlocking the Hidden Potential of the Dyslexic Brain*. Plume, 2012.

**Books for Kids:**

- Dahl, Roald, and Quentin Blake. *The Twits*. New York: Puffin, 2007.
- Colfer, Eoin, and Tony Ross. *The Legend of Spud Murphy*. Bath: Galaxy, 2005.
- Simon, Francesca, and Tony Ross. *Horrid Henry Robs the Bank*. London: Orion Children's, 2008
- Janover, Caroline, and Edward Epstein. *Josh: a Boy with Dyslexia*. Burlington, VT: Waterfront, 1990.
- Janover, Caroline, and Rosemary Wallner. *The Worst Speller in Jr. High*. Lincoln, NE: IUUniverse.com, 2000.

**Support Groups:**

- Austin Area Branch of The International Dyslexia Association, 512-452-7658
- The International Dyslexia Association (IDA) <http://www.interdys.org/index.htm>
- SchwabLearning <http://www.greatschools.org/special-education.topic?content=1541>
- Dyslexia Texas <http://www.dyslexia-parent.com/texas.html>

**References:**

- Perlstein, David. "Dyslexia Symptoms, Signs, Causes, Types, Diagnosis and Treatment on MedicineNet.com." [Http://www.medicinenet.com/dyslexia/article.htm](http://www.medicinenet.com/dyslexia/article.htm). Web. 04 Jan. 2012.  
<http://www.medicinenet.com/dyslexia/article.htm>.