

Dyslexia Infosheet

Dyslexia is difficulty learning to read

Children and adults with dyslexia often have difficulties with accurate and fluent word recognition and may also have difficulties with spelling, writing, reading comprehension.

Dyslexia is the most common learning difficulty effecting between 5-10 percent of people. Dyslexia does not impact on a person's intelligence and is not caused by vision difficulties.

Dyslexia is also known as a **specific learning disorder in reading**. Dyslexia is a brain-based (neurological) disorder or disability. People with dyslexia have difficulty working with the sounds in language (phonology) and the written form of language (orthography).

Children and adults with dyslexia often have a family history of dyslexia or other reading and/or spelling difficulties.

What are the indicators of dyslexia?

Young children with dyslexia may have difficulties with:



- delayed speech or difficulty pronouncing words
- rhyming (in nursery rhymes or songs) or identifying the initial sounds in words
- learning the alphabet
- writing their name
- early literacy activities at pre-school

Primary school aged children may often:



- have difficulties learning letter-sound relationships and how to blend sounds
- attempt to guess words rather than decode words
- have frequent errors when reading or read slowly without expression
- avoid reading, especially reading out loud, and show stress when asked to read
- have poor reading comprehension (they may also have stronger oral comprehension)
- be slow to complete literacy tasks
- show anxiety about school or signs of low self-esteem
- have difficulties with working memory

High school aged students:



High school students will have many of the same difficulties as primary school aged children and they may generally avoid reading, they may also have a reduced vocabulary or oral language skills and increased school-based anxiety or low self-concept or self-esteem.



How is **dyslexia** identified?

An **educational assessment or diagnosis** can be an important step in identifying strengths and weaknesses, assessing the best approach to intervention and ruling out other causes and comorbidities for a child or adult who has difficulties reading.

Dyslexia is generally diagnosed by a psychologist. (The diagnosis of a specific learning disorder cannot be made by someone who assesses vision, hearing, movement or any other skill in isolation.)

The psychologist will investigate learning strengths and difficulties. Tests used in an assessment may include standardised measures of:

- intellectual ability and cognitive skills
- expressive and receptive language ability
- underlying processing strengths and weaknesses
- academic achievement across a range of domains

Before a diagnosis of a **specific learning disorder in reading** (or dyslexia) is able to be made, it is essential that the child or adult being assessed has received at least six months of intervention focused on improving their reading skills.

“prior to a formal assessment, it is important to ensure that children are provided with well-designed instruction targeting the area in which the child is struggling. This instruction should be explicit, systematic and cumulative and needs to form the basis of an intervention that continues for at least six months.”

Understanding Learning Difficulties Guide for Parents, 2019

Before seeking an assessment or diagnosis of dyslexia it is also important to **check eyesight and hearing**. A GP or audiologist can assist with screening of hearing and an optometrist can screen eyesight.



Intervention to support a person with dyslexia

Students with dyslexia can improve their reading and spelling skills.

Early identification and early intervention can make a significant impact for students with dyslexia to ensure they do not fall too far behind in the development of their reading skills.

Students with dyslexia benefit from **explicit and structured instruction** in phonemic awareness and phonics (systematic, synthetic phonics) along with the other essential skills for reading (oral language, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension).

- 1) Phonemic Awareness
- 2) Phonics
- 3) Fluency
- 4) Vocabulary
- 5) Comprehension

"Findings from the research evidence indicate that all students learn best when teachers adopt an integrated approach to reading that explicitly teaches phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary knowledge and comprehension."

National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy in Australia, 2005

Students with dyslexia will generally need lots of opportunities to practise reading and spelling skills and so can benefit from **systematic synthetic phonics intervention programs** and working with learning support teachers or experienced tutors or speech pathologists.

Decodable readers are an essential tool for students with dyslexia while they are learning to read. Such readers gradually introduce **letter-sound knowledge** and give students opportunities to practice blending sounds together to read words.

Dyslexia is not resolved by vision interventions such as coloured glasses or eye exercises.

Adjustments to support a person with dyslexia

Students and adults with dyslexia can benefit from adjustments made to their school or work environments.

“An ‘adjustment’ is a measure or action taken to assist a student with disability to participate in education and training on the same basis as other students.”

Students with Disability, The Australian Curriculum

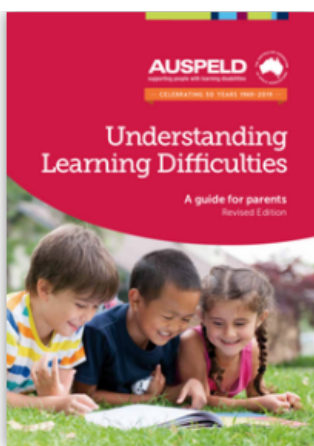
Adjustments to learning are very important for students struggling with reading and should be implemented in conjunction with appropriate intervention.

Adjustments need to be tailored to the individual and will change over time.

Adjustments include:

- only asking students to read aloud if they are comfortable
- allowing the use of audio books
- assistive technology such as text to speech software or C-Pen
- limiting the amount of reading and writing required
- providing outlines, summaries, vocabulary words and word banks
- extra time to complete tasks
- avoiding copying notes from the board
- allowing students to express knowledge verbally
- assistance with spelling, writing and editing (eg. use of a word processor, predictive spelling, scaffolded writing tasks, speech to text software)
- making allowances for poor working memory in relation to giving instructions and general school organisation
- directly sending parents/carers important information, homework and assessment tasks

More information



AUSPELD Understanding Learning Difficulties: A Guide for parents



AUSPELD Specific Learning Disorders Flowchart



International Dyslexia Organisation: Fact Sheets



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