



What Is Dyslexia? A Look at the Definition

IF YOU SUSPECT YOUR CHILD MAY BE DYSLEXIC:

1 Don't wait! Early identification and intervention are key

2 Share this tip sheet with your child's teacher and start a conversation

3 Ask the school to assess your child's reading skill development

4 Seek the support and resources of LD professionals, such as Learning Ally's Parent Support Specialists at **800.635.1403**

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability (SLD) 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 growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.

Adopted by the International Dyslexia Association's Board of Directors, November 12, 2002.

This definition is also used by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD).

• DIFFICULTIES WITH ACCURATE AND/OR FLUENT WORD RECOGNITION

Word Recognition is the ability of a reader to recognize written words correctly and virtually effortlessly. It entails a reader's ability to recognize words individually—from a list, for example—without the benefit of surrounding words or pictures for contextual help. Rapid and effortless word recognition is the main component of fluent reading.

• POOR SPELLING AND DECODING ABILITIES

Spelling, also called "encoding," is the process of using sound-symbol relationships to transpose speech into writing. **Decoding**, also called "phonics" or "word analysis," is the process of using sound-symbol relationships to figure out unfamiliar words, transposing them from print into speech. Spelling and reading are closely connected. Good readers can decode words correctly with little mental effort and are able to spell at levels close to their word reading ability.

• DEFICIT IN THE PHONOLOGICAL COMPONENT OF LANGUAGE

Phonological Awareness is a broad skill set that includes identifying and manipulating units of oral language – parts such as phonemes, syllables, and onsets and rimes. It is an important and reliable predictor of later reading ability. **Phonemic Awareness**, a subset of phonological awareness, is the ability to recognize that speech is made up of a sequence of sounds (phonemes) that can be manipulated—changed, added, or subtracted—to form different words: back, black, block, blob, bob.

• SECONDARY CONSEQUENCES

If the underlying skills described above are weak, students may find reading to be difficult and laborious and therefore, they will read less. **Reduced Reading Experience** can impact the **Growth of Vocabulary and Background Knowledge** which are required along with fluency, word recognition and decoding skills for strong **Reading Comprehension**.

To learn more about dyslexia and to take Learning Ally's online dyslexia screener, visit LearningAlly.org