



## SIGNS OF DYSLEXIA BY AGE

### The Preschool Years

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- Trouble learning common nursery rhymes, such as “Jack and Jill”
- Difficulty learning (and remembering) the names of letters in the alphabet
- Seems unable to recognize letters in his/her own name
- Mispronounces familiar words; persistent “baby talk”
- Doesn’t recognize rhyming patterns like *cat, bat, rat*
- A family history of reading and/or spelling difficulties (dyslexia often runs in families)

### Kindergarten & First Grade

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#### *Difficulties*

- Reading errors that show no connection to the sounds of the letters on the page—will say “puppy” instead of the written word “dog” on an illustrated page with a picture of a dog
- Does not understand that words come apart
- Complains about how hard reading is; “disappears” when it is time to read
- A history of reading problems in parents or siblings
- Cannot sound out even simple words like *cat, map, nap*
- Does not associate letters with sounds, such as the letter b with the “b” sound

#### *Strengths*

- Curiosity

- Great imagination
- Ability to figure things out; gets the gist of things
- Eager embrace of new ideas
- A good understanding of new concepts
- Surprising maturity
- A larger vocabulary than typical for age group
- Enjoys solving puzzles
- Talent for building models
- Excellent comprehension of stories read or told to him

## Second Grade through High School

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### *Reading*

- Very slow in acquiring reading skills. Reading is slow and awkward
- Trouble reading unfamiliar words, often making wild guesses because he cannot sound out the word
- Doesn't seem to have a strategy for reading new words
- Avoids reading out loud

### *Speaking*

- Searches for a specific word and ends up using vague language, such as "stuff" or "thing," without naming the object
- Pauses, hesitates, and/or uses lots of "um's" when speaking
- Confuses words that sound alike, such as saying "tornado" for "volcano," substituting "lotion" for "ocean"
- Mispronunciation of long, unfamiliar or complicated words
- Seems to need extra time to respond to questions

### *School and Life*

- Trouble remembering dates, names, telephone numbers, random lists
- Struggles to finish tests on time
- Extreme difficulty learning a foreign language
- Poor spelling
- Messy handwriting

- Low self-esteem that may not be immediately visible

### *Strengths*

- Excellent thinking skills: conceptualization, reasoning, imagination, abstraction
- Learning that is accomplished best through meaning rather than rote memorization
- Ability to get the “big picture”
- A high level of understanding of what is read to him
- The ability to read and to understand at a high level overlearned (or highly practiced) words in a special area of interest; for example, if he or she loves cooking they may be able to read food magazines and cookbooks
- Improvement as an area of interest becomes more specialized and focused—and a miniature vocabulary is developed that allows for reading in that subject area
- A surprisingly sophisticated listening vocabulary
- Excels in areas not dependent on reading, such as math, computers and visual arts, or in more conceptual (versus fact-driven) subjects, including philosophy, biology, social studies, neuroscience and creative writing

## **Young Adults & Adults**

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### *Reading*

- A childhood history of reading and spelling difficulties
- While reading skills have developed over time, reading still requires great effort and is done at a slow pace
- Rarely reads for pleasure
- Slow reading of most materials—books, manuals, subtitles in films
- Avoids reading aloud

### *Speaking*

- Earlier oral language difficulties persist, including a lack of fluency and glibness; frequent use of “um’s” and imprecise language; and general anxiety when speaking
- Often pronounces the names of people and places incorrectly; trips over parts of words
- Difficulty remembering names of people and places; confuses names that sound alike

- Struggles to retrieve words; frequently has “It was on the tip of my tongue” moments
- Rarely has a fast response in conversations; struggles when put on the spot
- Spoken vocabulary is smaller than listening vocabulary
- Avoids saying words that might be mispronounced

#### *School & Life*

- Despite good grades, often says he’s dumb or is concerned that peers think he’s dumb
- Penalized by multiple-choice tests
- Frequently sacrifices social life for studying
- Suffers extreme fatigue when reading
- Performs rote clerical tasks poorly

#### *Strengths*

- Maintains strengths noted during the school-age years
- Has a high capacity to learn
- Shows noticeable improvement when given additional time on multiple-choice examinations
- Demonstrates excellence when focused on a highly specialized area, such as medicine, law, public policy, finance, architecture or basic science
- Excellent writing skills if the focus is on content, not spelling
- Highly articulate when expressing ideas and feelings
- Exceptional empathy and warmth
- Successful in areas not dependent on rote memory
- A talent for high-level conceptualization and the ability to come up with original insights
- Inclination to think outside of the box and see the big picture
- Noticeably resilient and able to adapt

Source Shaywitz, S. 2020. *Overcoming Dyslexia, Second Edition, Revisedign*. Second Vintage Books.



## COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS OF DYSLEXIA

What Dyslexia is not:

- A primary problem in reading comprehension.
- A primary language comprehension problem
- Primary problem in attention or behavior
- Poor vision or hearing
- Autism
- Limited Intelligence
- Lack of appropriate instruction or limited educational opportunity
- Primarily due to English as a second language

Common Misconceptions:

- People with dyslexia cannot read
- Dyslexia is seeing things backward
  - Many young children reverse letters when learning to write. While it is true that dyslexic children have difficulties attaching the appropriate labels or names to letters and words, there is no evidence that they actually see letters and words backward.
- Children can outgrow dyslexia
- Dyslexia cannot be diagnosed until at least 3<sup>rd</sup> grade
  - Professionals with extensive training can accurately diagnose dyslexia as early as age 5. The sooner a diagnosis is made, the quicker your child can get help, and the more likely you are to prevent secondary blows to their self-esteem. Parents need to be aware of the warning signs of a risk for dyslexia before 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. It should be noted that the combination of a family history of dyslexia and symptoms of difficulties in spoken language can help identify a vulnerable child even before he/she begins formal schooling.
- More boys than girls have dyslexia
  - This has been a tricky one (and a moving target, somewhat). Quite honestly, it can even be difficult to pin down the prevalence of dyslexia; some say 1 in 5, others say between 5-17%. Boys' reading disabilities have historically been identified more often than girls', but past studies indicated that such identification was biased and the actual prevalence of the disorder was nearly identical in the two sexes (Shaywitz, Shaywitz, Fletcher, & Escobar, 1990). More recently, it has been found that indeed reading impairment is more prevalent in boys (Quinn & Wagner, 2015). Additionally, using fMRI, researchers have found differences in the brain anatomy of dyslexic boys versus girls and caution using male-based models of brain behavior for females (Evans, Flowers, Napoliello, & Eden, 2013).
- Dyslexia is rare

- In the United States, NIH research has shown that dyslexia affects 20%, or 1 in every 5 people. Some people may have more mild forms, while others may experience it more severely. Dyslexia is one of the most common cause of reading difficulties in elementary school children because only 1 in 10 dyslexics will qualify for an IEP and special education that will allow them to get the help in reading that they need
- All struggling readers have dyslexia.
- Any child who reverses letters or numbers has dyslexia.
  - Up to a certain point, it is considered normal for children to reverse their letters and numbers, and is actually quite common. However, if this does not stop after two years of handwriting instruction, it becomes a warning sign for dyslexia.
- Retaining a child (i.e., holding them back a grade) will improve their academic struggles.
  - According to several institutions (i.e., The U.S. Department of Education, The American Federation of Teachers and The National Association of School Psychologists) and their extensive research there is no benefit to retention because it has never improved a student's academic struggles.

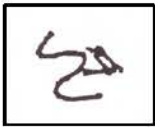
# Stages of Writing Development

As children connections between spoken and written language, they extend their understanding to include symbolic forms that are used to capture speech. Preschool-age children typically engage in reading and writing activities in casual and playful ways. Sulzby, Teale, and Kamberelis (1989, p. 77) note that children who have had frequent opportunities to write and read at home are more likely to enter conventional literacy as confident, risk-taking readers and writers.

For almost all children in a literate society, learning to write and read begins early in life. Early writing develops concurrently and interrelatedly with literacy in young children who actively engage in understanding how written language works (Schickedanz 1999).

The following illustrations were developed from the works of Temple, Nathan, Temple and Burris, (1992) and D. H. Graves (1989) and from drawings compiled by Helen Faul of the California Kindergarten Association. They show the broad milestones that children achieve in art, literacy, spelling, and writing. (These stages are interrelated in young children, who make no distinction between these subject areas.)

## Prephonemic Stage



Random scribbling - The starting point is any place on the page.



Controlled scribbling - Progression is from left to right.



Circular scribbling - Circles or ovals flow on the page.



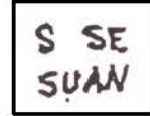
Drawing - Pictures tell a story or convey a message.



Mock letters – These can be personal or conventional symbols, such as a heart, star, or letters with extra lines.



Letter strings - These move from left to right and progress down the page of actual letters. They have no separations and no correlation with words or sounds.



Separated words-Groups of letters have space in between to resemble words.

## Early Phonemic Stage



Picture labeling - A picture's beginning sound is matched to a letter (*Dog*.)



Awareness of environmental print - Environmental print, such as names on cubbies, is copied.



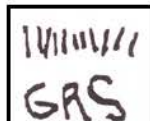
Transitional stage spelling or invented spelling - First letter of a word is used to represent the word (*I went to the nature museum*).

## Letter-Name Stage



Beginning and ending letters are used to represent a word (*cat*).

## Transitional Stage



Medial sound is a consonant (*grass*).



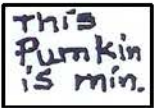
Medial sound is in correct position, but the vowel is wrong (*grass*).



A child hears beginning, medial, and ending letters (*I like to pick flowers*).



Phrase writing develops (*rabbit in the sun*).



Whole-sentence writing develops (*This pumpkin is mine*).

## Conventional Writing Stage



Transitional stage spelling (or invented spelling) is replaced by full, correct spelling of words.

Some teachers assess using sequences to make developmental checklists or portfolio inventory sheets. During choice time, the teacher observes and notes any writing behavior. These notes are later entered onto an inventory sheet in a child's portfolio. This compilation of records for each child shows growth over time and is a valuable tool for lesson planning, parent conferences, and statistics on student achievement. More information can be found in *The Beginnings of Writing and More Than the ABCs: The Early Stages of Reading and Writing*.

### References

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- Schickedanz, J. 1999. *Much More Than the ABCs: The Early Stages of Reading and Writing*. Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
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