

Dyslexia - Parent Guide

Fact Sheet

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Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a neurological disability that affects the language system and the development of literacy skills. It is defined as a specific learning disorder more specifically a reading disorder.

It is characterised by problems with spelling, accurate or fluent word recognition, working memory, processing speed, rapid automatic naming, reading comprehension, phonological decoding and weak phonemic awareness.

As a general guide if your child is not making realistic gains in reading it is worth following your instincts and getting your child assessed. Do not let anyone tell you to wait and see or say they are too young to be assessed. Early intervention is of paramount importance before self esteem and mental health issues develop. Checklists are not always reliable so follow your instincts. Dyslexia is difficult to diagnose as it occurs across a spectrum and professional advice should always be sought.

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Dyslexia Assessment

"The most important reason for assessing dyslexia is for effective educational literacy intervention not a label. There is no one single test which can identify dyslexia. The assessor must have post graduate specialist qualifications in language and reading development, be able to interpret how difficulties in the reading process affects learning and the required pedagogy. The dyslexia assessor must be formally qualified in the field of dyslexia, reading research and possess a knowledge of current diagnostic test selection and how to evaluate the results for educational instruction and/or provisions. There are numerous misinterpretations and misleading use of the terms screening, assessment and a profile." "Dyslexia in Australia." "How Is Dyslexia Assessed?" How Is Dyslexia Assessed? | Dyslexia Association Australia. Web. 31 Mar. 2016.

Diagnostic Criteria

- A. A persistent difficulty learning academic skills for at least 6 months despite intervention. In regard to dyslexia the areas of persistent weakness may include:
1. Inaccurate and slow reading.
 2. Difficulty with word decoding.
 3. Difficulty with the comprehension of text.
 4. Spelling.
 5. Difficulties with grammar, punctuation and other writing skills.
- B. The areas of weakness or skill impairment are significantly below the expectation and impede academic progress.
- C. Learning difficulties may not be apparent until the demands of school are in excess of the student's progress.
- D. The academic and learning difficulties do not occur because of other issues such intellectual, hearing, vision, mental health or due to inadequate instruction.

Summarised from The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-5. Washington: American Psychiatric, 2014. Print.

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Dyslexia is not curable and is a lifelong disability. It can be remediated with appropriate intervention but some difficulties may still persist.

Dyslexia can occur at any level of intellectual ability and the IQ discrepancy model is no longer regarded as an accurate diagnostic tool. It occurs across all languages but due to the complexity and variations in the English language difficulties are more apparent.

DSM-5

THE DSM-5 IS THE DIAGNOSTIC AND STATISTICAL MANUAL OF MENTAL DISORDERS FIFTH EDITION, AMERICAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION

The DSM-5 includes dyslexia as a Specific Reading Disorder - "Dyslexia is an alternative term used to refer to a pattern of learning difficulties characterized by problems with accurate or fluent word recognition, poor decoding, and poor spelling abilities." Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-5. Washington: American Psychiatric, 2014. Print.

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First Steps

- Hearing test by GP or preferably an audiologist.
- Vision test by an optometrist or preferably an ophthalmologist.
- Psychometric testing or IQ testing. This is not necessary for diagnosis of dyslexia but is required to identify a child's areas of strength and weakness. School's understand psychometric testing.

Pre Assessment

The Australian Dyslexia Association (ADA) offers a low cost (under \$150) comprehensive pre assessment. This involves parent and teacher questionnaires and writing samples. This indicates whether the child is likely or not to have dyslexia. This service is offered to avoid expensive comprehensive testing.

<http://dyslexiaassociation.org.au/ada-dyslexia-screening-assessment-service>

Assessment

A good report will have recommendations of specific adjustments to learning. We DO NOT recommend getting assessed by any organisation linked to a programme.

SPELD in your state or the ADA are examples of well regarded not for profit organisations that can recommend an assessor. There are other reputable organisations in different areas.

Educational psychologists are not all trained in how to perform a dyslexia diagnosis so you should seek one who has further qualifications or experience in dyslexia testing.

Dyslexia Intervention

There are a number of programmes designed to remediate reading including computer or booklet based programmes. Many are well researched and have shown efficacy in an educational setting. Others are well regarded synthetic phonics or systematic, explicit phonics programs which follow the science of how children learn to read. Every program has its deficiencies and will not suit every child.

The Australian Dyslexia Association, Learning Difficulties Australia and SPELD in your state have lists of appropriately trained and approved tutors. These organisations are not for profit.

"An evidence-based practice can be defined as an instructional strategy, intervention, or teaching program that has resulted in consistent positive results when experimentally tested." Carinci, Jennifer. "Evidence-Based Practice for Special Educators Teaching Students with Autism." Johns Hopkins School of Education - Home. 15

Caution should be taken when seeking out alternative therapies.

Please do your research before investing time and money into any program.

Early intervention is essential and a failed intervention has significant impact on mental health.

Avoid anything that promises a quick fix or a cure.

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