



Signs of Dyslexia by Age Group

Preschool-Age Children

At this stage, a child is still acquiring language, and actively developing phonological awareness. Activities such as rhyming verse and songs, frequent sight word and short story readings, story circles, etc. are common at this age. Signs of dyslexia at this stage may include:

- Delayed speech, including sound production and intelligibility, even when pronouncing familiar words
- Inability to match letters to their names or sounds;
- Difficulty recognizing written words, even their own name
- Difficulty with directionality
- Delayed learning of vocabulary
- Difficulty learning and maintaining information such as alphabet, delayed vocabulary, and simple concepts such as sequencing, days of the week, etc.
- Lack of interest in books or any written text

Helpful interventions, strategies, accommodations include:

Use of multi-sensory activities, such as writing in sand or shaving cream; programs showing visual cues, such as pictures, alongside letters and words, with an audible presentation of letters and words; exposure to engaging and colorful children's literature to spark independent interest in reading

Students in Kindergarten through Grade One

At this stage, students begin receiving formal reading and writing instruction. Phonics and phonemic awareness are explicitly taught. Students are expected to be able to identify all letters of the alphabet by name and sounds. "Sounding out" strategies are also taught at this age. Signs of dyslexia at this stage may include:

- Inability to manipulate sounds, whether single sounds –e.g. /s/, or units of meaning, such as affixes, and breaking compound words into parts
- Difficulty with segmentation, with sounding out words, breaking words into syllables
- Difficulty recognizing or accurately repeating sounds, or sound patterns, such as rhyming words
- Difficulty with sound symbol association. Reading errors may not be connected to sounds on the page
- Difficulty remembering basic sight words or printed signs
- Inability to track text, and reliance on pictures for comprehension
- Inability to spell, or phonetic spelling
- Complaints of not liking to read

Helpful interventions, strategies, accommodations include:

Continue interventions from previous age group, and add lengthier stories and articles; go over vocabulary to be used ahead of time, specifically noting word families, or word

patterns, such as blends, diphthongs, etc.; use explicit instruction pointing out these patterns in words used in text; use of reader or audio presentation of text, while simultaneously presenting written form of words and passages.

Students in Second and Third Grade

At this stage, students are expected to read longer words and passages. Instruction regarding grammar, and use of verb tense become more complex. There is increased demand for students to comprehend and respond to what they've read. Reading begins to play a larger role in other subjects as well, such as math and science. Signs of dyslexia at this stage may include:

- Continuing difficulty learning the connection between letters and sounds
- Continuing difficulty with recognition of high frequency words, as well as confusion of words that are spelled similarly
- Continuing difficulty with segmentation, syllabication, and confusion of sounds and words that are similar (e.g. what/want; these/those).
- Difficulty with word attack skills, and tendency to make “wild guesses”, or to read words based on the first few letters
- Avoidance of reading aloud, due to frequent errors, pausing or hesitancy while reading
- Difficulty with recall of common words as well as information, such as dates, phone numbers, names and random facts
- Difficulty with time telling, time management and organization
- Consistent reading and spelling errors, such as letter reversals, word reversals, inversions, transpositions, omissions and substitutions

Helpful interventions, strategies, accommodations include:

Continue use of explicit vocabulary instruction, as noted in previous age group, as well as concurrent audio and written presentation of material; use of reading aids, such as a reading “slot” or “window”, or highlighted text on computer (whatever is appropriate and helpful for the individual student); reading lengthier passages, and engaging with an adult to discuss responses to what's been read.

It is suggested at this stage that students begin reading regularly at home, books or stories that are enjoyable and at an appropriate level for independent reading.

Students in Fourth Grade Through Eighth Grade

At this stage, reading demands shift dramatically. Instruction moves from “learning to read” to “reading to learn”. The focus is more on comprehension and fluency. At the same time, students are expected to write more complex and lengthier assignments, such as multi-paragraph essays. Signs of dyslexia at this stage may include:

- History (may include documented evidence) of struggling with reading and writing tasks

- Demonstration of reading error patterns typical of younger children, such as lack of smoothness, lack of attention to punctuation, word substitutions and omissions, frequent pauses or hesitation, etc.
- Frequent errors when reading and spelling common sight words
- Lack of awareness of word structure, and knowledge of affixes to support reading
- Difficulty learning/remembers new information obtained from written text
- Fluency of reading begins to interfere with comprehension
- Poor performance on tests and written assignments, with better performance noted on oral assignments and tests
- Persistence of earlier oral language difficulties
- Consistent choices of reading material well below grade level, or avoidance of reading altogether
- Difficulty organizing ideas for writing
- Illegible handwriting
- Continuing and growing difficulty and need for assistance with time management, managing and organizing assignments, etc.
- The need to reread material several times in order to comprehend content
- Ability to comprehend may fall further behind, now including mathematics, as word problems become more common

Helpful interventions, strategies, accommodations include:

Continue with interventions listed for previous age group, as deemed appropriate; increase strategies using morphology (breaking words into meaningful segments, such as affixes and roots); instructions repeated explicitly and frequent checks for understanding; instruction in use of graphic organizers, student planner, time management system, note-taking system, expanded use of assistive technology, such as listening to lessons, and assigned text on audio, and use of speech to text extensions for written assignments.

Students in High School Through College

At this stage, students are expected to be proficient readers and writers, capable of learning information through reading, as well as effectively communicating through writing. Signs of dyslexia at this stage may include:

- A childhood history, and continuation of reading and spelling difficulties
- A tendency to read with great effort, with poor fluency and expression, frequent errors, and halting
- Avoidance of tasks requiring reading and writing
- Difficulty with note-taking in lecture based classes
- Use of lower level vocabulary and imprecise language, such as “stuff”, and “things” and difficulty with word retrieval
- Difficulty remembering names
- Difficulty with multiple-choice tests

- Difficulty in completing rote clerical task, managing time, and staying current with assignments
- Fatigue when reading and spending inordinate amount of time on homework (or other reading/writing tasks)
- Poor self-image; thinking of self as dumb
- Continuation of speech, language and other related problems that began in early childhood

Helpful interventions, strategies, accommodations include:

Provide guidance in developing higher-level concepts in all areas; extra review for new content specific vocabulary; extra time for reading material that is informationally dense; continued use of strategies using morphology (breaking words into meaningful segments, such as affixes and roots); continued and increasing use of graphic organizers for written assignments, use of student planner, with emphasis added for “backwards” planning of long-term assignments; instruction in use of advanced note-taking system, such as Cornell Notes; continued and expanded use of assistive technology for both text to speech, and speech to text (for written assignments)