

# Dyslexia



Students with dyslexia experience difficulty learning to read or interpret words, letters and other symbols. If left unsupported, they can be at a disadvantage both in and out of the classroom. Like all learning differences and disabilities, dyslexia can negatively affect a student's self-esteem and self-image as they regularly encounter situations where they feel less capable than their fellow students.

Dyslexia is common in twice-exceptional students. Early identification, access to effective accommodations, and consistent opportunities to use strengths and talents help students with dyslexia succeed in school and in life.

## Dyslexia Explained

In modern education systems, reading skills are necessary to achieve success in nearly all subject areas. Given this, the demands of school can be especially great for students with dyslexia, a learning difference that makes sounding out written words, recognizing words in text, spelling, reading, comprehending what is read, writing, rhyming, solving word problems, and learning another language difficult.

Dyslexia is a learning disability and lifelong condition diagnosed through an expert evaluation by a qualified professional such as an licensed educational psychologist or neurologist. The evaluation is designed to determine if there is a deficit in reading ability and to rule out other possible causes, such as hearing problems or social, environmental, or cognitive factors. If an outside professional evaluation is not possible, parents can request an evaluation through their school district in most cases.

Although it is true that dyslexia makes learning in today's educational environments more difficult, it is not an indication of lower intelligence or laziness. Dyslexia is present in all

populations and at all intellectual levels. Although dyslexics are often identified at a young age, it is not uncommon for diagnosis to take place well into adulthood. Dyslexia runs in families and is a common learning disability in twice-exceptional youth. For high-ability students, dyslexia can be difficult to diagnose as they may be able to compensate for their difficulties and reach educational milestones despite their challenges. This is known as "stealth dyslexia".

Researchers have made connections between dyslexia and certain cognitive strengths related to creativity and original thinking as well as strong 3-D reasoning and building, creative problem-solving, high intuition, storytelling, and integrating vast and divergent ideas and concepts. By carefully balancing remediation of learning challenges with the development of strengths and talents, dyslexic students can excel and build the confidence and skills needed to reach their potential.

Early identification and help from a teacher, tutor, or therapist who specializes in multisensory, structured language approach along with access to educational counseling and strength-based talent-focused opportunities are essential for positioning dyslexic students for success.



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# Characteristics of Dyslexia

A number of challenges and strengths are associated with dyslexia at every stage of development and schooling. Students can show signs as early as preschool and may exhibit the following at any point:

- Difficulty with visual and auditory attention, processing, executive functioning, verbal fluency and math fluency
- Trouble solving word problems and remembering dates, names, telephone numbers and random lists
- Delayed development of reading skills and reliance on vague language rather than naming objects
- Learning best through hands-on experience, demonstrations, experimentation, observation, and visual aids
- Reading with errors that reveal no connection to the sounds of the letters presented in the text
- Excellent thinking, conceptualization, reasoning, imagination, and abstraction skills
- Avoidance of reading out loud and speaking slowly with frequent fillers such as “um”
- Strong comprehension of stories and an ability to figure things out and see the “big picture” quickly
- Sophisticated listening vocabulary and high level of comprehending what is read to them

## Supporting Dyslexic Students

The results of an expert diagnostic evaluation should indicate specific areas of reading and writing to be addressed. This helps teachers and parents provide targeted support both in and out of school. Under the right conditions, intensive and skillful instruction in basic word reading skills can have a significant impact on comprehension and reading ability. Effective support can also be guided by the age and grade level of the student. There are many effective methods for helping dyslexic students overcome their challenges and improve academic performance including the use of technology. A balanced approach for the remediation of weaknesses and fostering of strengths best positions students to find success early and often.

In the United States, protections for students with learning disabilities lie within federal legislation for special education and civil rights and apply to programs and activities supported by federal funding. IDEA, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Sec. 300.8 (c) (10), 2018) provides specific protections and guidance for helping students with specific disabilities reach their potential through special education. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2021) provides protections and guidance for helping students with a broad range of disabilities, including dyslexia, succeed in the regular classroom. Parents are critical advocates for the student, and becoming familiar with the services available to them and collaborating closely with the student, teachers, and clinicians to ensure access to them is essential.

## Resources for Parents & Educators

- 2e News
- Bright & Quirky
- Davidson Institute for Talent Development
- GHF Gifted Learners (formerly Gifted Homeschoolers Forum)
- Hoagies' Gifted Education
- Let's Talk 2e
- National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC)
- Renzulli Center at University of Connecticut
- Roeper Review
- Summit Center
- Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted (SENG)

## About Summit Center

Summit Center, founded by Drs. Daniel B. Peters and Susan Daniels, provides educational and comprehensive assessments, consultations, and counseling for children, teens, adults, and families. We work with clients who are neurodiverse, gifted, talented, twice-exceptional (have both gifted and less developed abilities), and/or are asynchronous in their development. Summit Center has assembled an expert team of professionals and specialists dedicated to using a strengths-based approach to help our clients reach their fullest developmental potential.