

AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO DYSLEXIA



Hidden in Plain Sight: An Educator's Guide to Dyslexia

**Did you know
Einstein struggled
with dyslexia?**

He had an IQ of
160, which just
goes to show that
when it comes
to dyslexia
every student
is different.

What is dyslexia?

"Dyslexia is a different brain organization that needs different teaching methods." — Dr. Maryanne Wolf, Director, Center for Dyslexia, Diverse Learners and Social Justice, UCLA

One of the most gratifying experiences an educator can have is seeing a student succeed. However, sometimes educators encounter an intelligent, hardworking student who consistently struggles with reading. Most likely this student is battling the most common cause of reading, writing and spelling difficulties: dyslexia.

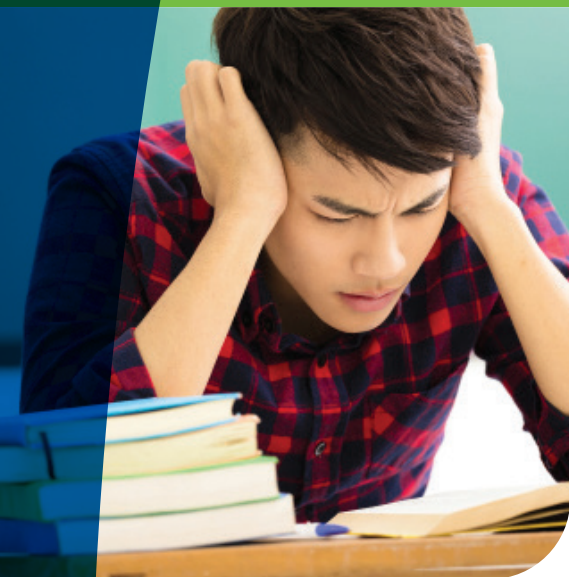
The International Dyslexia Association defines dyslexia as: "A language-based learning disability. Dyslexia refers to a cluster of symptoms, which result in people having difficulties with specific language skills, particularly reading. Students with dyslexia usually experience difficulties with other language skills such as spelling, writing and pronouncing words."

Dyslexia can be difficult to recognize

One in five American students has dyslexia. Chances are you have one or more of these students in your classroom. Dyslexia can easily be mistaken for a behavioral issue. What appears to be laziness or acting out is actually a student struggling with reading.

Dyslexia can also go undetected because students are smart enough to find ways to compensate for and/or hide their reading deficits, so they are never discovered. They use their intelligence, creativity and verbal skills to mask their reading challenges.

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Does this sound like one of your students?

If so, your next step should be to speak to the student's parents as well as the specialists in your school or district to request a formal screening. If diagnosed with dyslexia (or another learning disability), you should work with the parents and the specialists to plan a course of action to help the student succeed.

You can use your daily experience in the classroom and knowledge of your students to recognize the signs that are often hiding in plain sight.

Seven Common Signs of Dyslexia

- 1. Student doesn't recognize words accurately.** You show him a picture of rabbits, with the caption "rabbits," and he responds "bunnies."
- 2. Student can't read a sentence smoothly.** You may notice your student skipping small words in a sentence. For example, if you asked her to read the previous sentence, she would do so as "may skip small words sentence."
- 3. Student is a poor speller.** You should raise a red flag when a student consistently uses irregular capitalization, omits vowels and changes phonetic spelling. For example, "said" becomes "sed" when written out.
- 4. Student has difficulty decoding words.** Decoding is a fundamental reading skill. Take note if the student shows trouble with being able to match letters to sounds and then use that skill to read words accurately and fluently.
- 5. Student has below-average rhyming skills.** You may notice that a student has a hard time rhyming. Students with dyslexia struggle with hearing the component sounds in words and therefore often don't appreciate the subtleties of rhymes. Additionally, they may read in a monotone style.
- 6. Student acts out at reading time.** If a student becomes easily distracted, starts bothering classmates or desires to leave the classroom, she may be trying to avoid reading.
- 7. Student's reading ability is far below his/her intelligence level.** Dyslexia is not connected to intelligence in any way. In fact, you may notice that a student who struggles with reading often excels in other areas.

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If you have a student with dyslexia, you can incorporate certain strategies that address your student's needs—and the rest of your classroom—even if you aren't a specialist in teaching children with dyslexia.

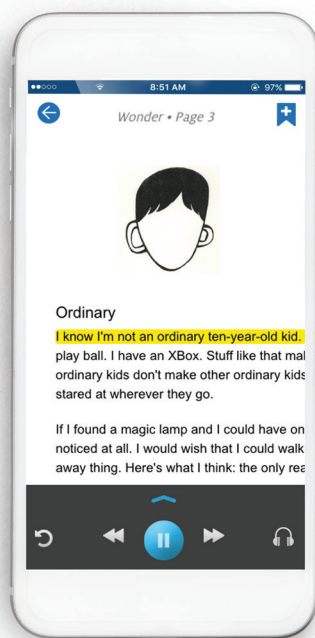
SOME SIMPLE TOOLS AND TIPS

Students with dyslexia will begin to regain their confidence if you can remove certain everyday obstacles that make them feel like they're failing as students. Consider the following:

- » **Don't make students read in front of the class.** Since students with dyslexia struggle to decode, having to read aloud puts extra pressure on them and might make them reluctant to read at all.
- » **Give students extra time for classwork and tests.** Students with dyslexia will most likely need more time than other students to read and comprehend assignments and tests.
- » **Read questions aloud to ensure comprehension.** Students with dyslexia can better understand directions and questions when they are able to see and hear the information at the same time.
- » **Provide examples of what the work should look like.** If expectations for classwork and homework are clearly communicated and demonstrated, students with dyslexia are better able to meet them.
- » **Don't take points off for incorrect spelling.** Spelling words the way they sound is common for students with dyslexia; reversing letters is too. If the answer is correct, overlook spelling "mistakes."

AUDIOBOOKS CAN BE A GAME-CHANGER

For students with dyslexia and other learning differences that require reading intervention, leveled readers may not be enough. They help students learn to read, but they also limit their opportunities to acquire grade-level content. As a result, struggling students often fall behind, become disengaged and lose interest in learning. Audiobooks bridge the reading gap by providing access to grade-level content in a multisensory format students can easily absorb. Benefits of audiobooks include::



Improved comprehension, because students can hear and read the text simultaneously

Better word recognition, increased reading rates and improved overall vocabulary

Increased confidence and self-esteem, which contribute to academic success

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Put Learning Ally to Work for Your Struggling Readers

The Learning Ally Audiobook Solution is a proven multi sensory reading accommodation. It gives struggling readers with dyslexia and other learning differences equitable access to the books they want to read and the grade-level content they need to read—from popular fiction to classic literature and textbooks.

With its extensive library of human-read audiobooks, a suite of educator resources and a host of student-centric features, Learning Ally helps struggling readers become confident, independent learners. It can increase students' reading ability by as much as three grade levels in a single school year.:

BENEFITS OF LEARNING ALLY AUDIOBOOK SOLUTION

- » Engages struggling readers, improving academic performance and social-emotional outcomes
- » Maximizes teacher effectiveness, learning time and in-class discussion opportunities
- » Aligns with your existing curriculum or intervention programs

Find out how the Learning Ally Audiobook Solution can be a game-changer for your struggling readers.

“Learning Ally has helped our students develop a love and passion for reading that would have been inaccessible to them without the support Learning Ally gives.”

TAMMY MCENTIRE,
LEARNING/READING SPECIALIST,
WESTSIDE ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL, JONESBORO, AR

LEARNING ALLY is a leading education solutions organization dedicated to transforming the lives of struggling learners. The Learning Ally Audiobook Solution is a proven multi-sensory reading accommodation for students with a reading deficit composed of high quality, human-read audiobooks, student-centric features and a suite of teacher resources to monitor and support student success. Used in more than 17,000 schools, this essential solution bridges the gap between a student's reading ability and their cognitive capability, empowering them to become engaged learners and reach their academic potential.