



Dyslexia Canada



WHAT IS DYSLEXIA?

www.dyslexiacanada.org



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Dyslexia is a common reading difficulty. It is a learning disability that makes it harder to read words accurately, automatically, or both.

DYSLEXIA CAN ALSO AFFECT

In addition to challenges with reading words, dyslexia can also make other parts of literacy more challenging:

Spelling

Dyslexia can make it difficult to spell words correctly, even when a student knows what they want to write.

Writing

Written work may not fully reflect a student's knowledge because getting ideas onto paper can be difficult.

Reading comprehension

Understanding what is read can be difficult when words are read inaccurately, slowly, or with great effort.

HOW COMMON IS DYSLEXIA?

Dyslexia is the most common cause of reading difficulties. It affects an estimated 5% to 20% of the population. In a class of 20 students, that could mean between 1 and 4 children.

MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS

Even though dyslexia is common, it's often misunderstood. These misconceptions can prevent people with dyslexia from being understood and receiving the support they need.

Dyslexia is NOT a sign of low intelligence

Dyslexia occurs in people with a wide range of abilities.

Dyslexia is NOT caused by a lack of effort.

Dyslexia isn't caused by a lack of effort, and many students with dyslexia work harder than their peers to learn to read.

Dyslexia is NOT a result of poor parenting

Dyslexia isn't caused by poor parenting or by not reading enough with a child. Reading with children is important, but it does not prevent dyslexia.

Dyslexia is NOT caused by vision problems

Difficulties with reading and spelling aren't caused by poor eyesight, visual processing, or tracking.

Dyslexia is NOT something children outgrow

Waiting for reading to improve rarely works. Children with dyslexia need effective instruction, not just more time.

Dyslexia is NOT an inability to learn to read

With the right instruction and support, people with dyslexia can learn to read well.

SIGNS OF DYSLEXIA

A child or adult with dyslexia may:

- Have difficulty learning the alphabet and the sounds that letters represent
- Have problems rhyming or noticing sounds in words
- Struggle to sound out unfamiliar words
- Read slowly or with effort
- Avoid reading and writing tasks
- Have difficulty spelling even common words
- Know more than they can easily show in writing

ASSESSMENT

Psychoeducational assessments

Dyslexia is identified through a psychoeducational assessment conducted by a psychologist. These assessments are provided either by a child's school system or privately. The psychologist reviews the child's developmental, educational, and family history, gathers information from parents and teachers, and administers tests of academic, language, cognitive, and attention skills. The family receives the results in a detailed written report.

Early reading screening

Many schools now use early reading screening several times a year in Kindergarten to Grade 2. Screening helps identify students who may need extra support before they fall behind. It also provides information teachers can use to plan instruction. Screening is not a diagnosis of dyslexia, but patterns in screening data over time can help families and educators determine whether a child may benefit from a comprehensive assessment.

DIFFERENT NAMES FOR DYSLLEXIA

In Canada, dyslexia is often called:

- **Learning Disability (LD):** This term is often used in schools.
- **Specific Learning Disorder:** This term is often used in medical settings and by psychologists.

These are broader terms. When a person's main difficulty is reading words accurately or fluently, the more specific term dyslexia may be used. Some people prefer the term dyslexia because it is more specific. It is also used by many successful adults whose experiences and achievements can inspire children.



WHAT WORKS FOR DYSPLEXIA

With the right support, students with dyslexia can develop the skills and confidence they need to succeed:

Structured literacy

Students with dyslexia benefit from structured literacy instruction. This approach teaches reading and writing explicitly and systematically through instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, decoding, spelling, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Some students, including those with dyslexia, may need more intensive support, such as additional instructional time, smaller groups, more explicit instruction, and increased opportunities for guided practice and feedback.

Accommodations

Accommodations can help students access classroom learning while they continue to build reading and writing skills. Depending on the student's needs, supports such as text-to-speech, audiobooks, speech-to-text, or extra time may be helpful. Accommodations don't replace instruction, but they can reduce barriers and help students demonstrate their knowledge.

Supporting self-esteem

Learning to read can be frustrating for students who must work harder than their peers. Recognizing strengths, celebrating progress, and providing encouragement can help students maintain confidence and resilience.

WHAT DOESN'T WORK FOR DYSPLEXIA

Many myths and misconceptions about dyslexia persist. As a result, many ineffective treatments and interventions continue to be promoted. Some can be expensive and may delay students' access to the evidence-based instruction and support they need.

Examples of treatments for dyslexia that are not supported by strong evidence include:

Dyslexia fonts

Specialized fonts haven't been shown to improve reading outcomes for students with dyslexia. They may also reinforce the misconception that dyslexia is a visual difficulty.

Some interventions

Interventions that aren't based on structured literacy principles are unlikely to address the underlying difficulties associated with dyslexia. This includes programs such as Reading Recovery and Leveled Literacy Intervention.

Vision therapy

Dyslexia isn't caused by vision problems. Vision therapy and eye exercises aren't effective treatments for reading difficulties related to dyslexia.

Coloured overlays

Tinted overlays and coloured backgrounds don't improve reading accuracy for students with dyslexia. Changing the colour of text or paper doesn't address the source of reading difficulties.

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