

# Dyslexia 101

## 1. What is Dyslexia?

- Dyslexia is a brain-based learning difference that primarily affects reading—especially decoding, accurate and fluent word recognition, and spelling.
- It is often linked to difficulties with the phonological (speech-sound) component of language.
- It is commonly described as an unexpected difficulty learning to read because it occurs in individuals with strong thinking skills, creativity, and oral language abilities.
- Dyslexia is not a sign of low intelligence, laziness, poor motivation, or bad parenting/teaching.
- It is not a vision problem, and children do not simply “outgrow” it. Time is of the essence!
- It is a brain-based language difference that requires explicit, structured reading support.

## 2. What are the Signs of Dyslexia by Age?

### Preschool/Kindergarten

- Difficulty learning letter names and sounds, associating letters with their sounds
- Trouble clapping syllables, identifying/changing initial sounds in words (/c/at, /b/at, etc)

### Early Elementary (1-3)

- slow effortful decoding; guesses words; may still not know letter names/sounds
- spelling far behind oral vocabulary
- reading / writing avoidance

### Upper Elementary+

- slow, effortful reading; lack of fluency; fatigued by reading
- good oral comprehension, poor outcomes on tests (especially if timed)

## 3. What Can Help My Struggling Reader?

- Instruction makes a difference! Students with dyslexia need a **Structured Literacy** reading program - instruction that is direct, explicit, systematic, and cumulative with substantial guided practice and review.
- Look for curriculum that includes all 5 pillars of the **Science of Reading**: Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, & Comprehension, plus Spelling.
- **Multisensory instruction** where students see it, hear it, say it, write/do it, help strengthens learning, especially when structured and sequential.
- Examples: Logic of English, UFLI, All About Reading/Spelling, Spellography, REWARDS (Anita Archer)

## 4. What Accommodations Support Access?

Accommodations do not replace good instruction and curriculum - they reduce barriers to learning:

- Audiobooks / Text-to-Speech
- Read Aloud for tests & content learning
- Speech-to-Text and typing for longer writing assignments
- Extra time for assignments and tests
- Flexible pacing for curriculum to allow time for extra practice & review
- Visual checklists & step-by-step directions

## 5. What to Do Next

1. Test the Skill Areas (sounds, decoding, spelling, fluency). Consider pursuing a professional screening or evaluation.
2. Begin targeted, explicit instruction using a Structured Literacy reading program grounded in the Science of Reading - the right teaching matters. The sooner students receive help, the more progress they can make, and the less they will lag their peers.
3. Monitor progress and adjust pacing and instruction as needed.
4. Seek professional reading therapy from a Certified Academic Language Therapist (CALT).