

How do we help students succeed?

Dyslexia is a life-long condition. With proper help, many people with dyslexia can learn to read and write well. Early identification and intervention is the key.

Most people with dyslexia need help from a teacher, tutor, or therapist specially trained in using a multisensory, structured language approach. Proper instruction promotes reading success and alleviates many difficulties associated with dyslexia. When students with dyslexia receive academic therapy outside of school, the therapist should work closely with classroom teachers, special education providers, and other school personnel. Students may also need help with emotional issues that sometimes arise as a consequence of difficulties in school. Mental health specialists can help students cope with their struggles. Instruction for individuals with learning differences should be:

- **Explicit** – directly teaches skills for reading, spelling, and writing.
- **Systematic and Cumulative** – has a definite, logical sequence of concept introduction.
- **Structured** – has step-by-step procedures for introducing, reviewing, and practicing concepts. Immediate, corrective feedback is necessary to develop automatic word recognition skills.
- **Multisensory** – engages the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic channels simultaneously or in rapid succession.

Recognizing and addressing dyslexia

For a list of resources related to dyslexia, visit doe.sd.gov/dyslexia/



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Definition of dyslexia:

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede the growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.

Adopted by the International Dyslexia Association Board of Directors, November 12, 2002.

Common characteristics of dyslexia

A person with dyslexia usually has several of these characteristics that persist over time.

Oral language

- Late learning to talk
- Difficulty pronouncing words
- Difficulty acquiring vocabulary or using age appropriate grammar
- Difficulty following a set of directions
- Confusion with before/after, right/left, and so on
- Difficulty learning the alphabet, nursery rhymes, or songs
- Difficulty with word retrieval or naming problems
- Difficulty explaining a story or answering specific key questions about a story

Reading

- Difficulty learning to read
- Difficulty identifying or generating rhyming words, or counting syllables in words (phonological awareness)
- Difficulty with hearing and manipulating sounds in words (phonemic awareness)
- Difficulty distinguishing different sounds in words (phonological processing)
- Difficulty in learning the sounds of letters (phonics)
- Difficulty remembering names of letters, or naming letters rapidly
- Transposing the order of letters when reading or spelling
- Misreading or omitting common short words
- “Stumbles” through longer words
- Poor reading comprehension during oral or silent reading, often because words are not accurately read
- Slow, laborious oral reading

Written language

- Difficulty with syntax and sequencing words leading to difficulty in putting ideas on paper
- Many spelling mistakes
- May do well on weekly spelling tests, but may have the same spelling mistakes in daily work
- Difficulty proofreading (capitalization, punctuation, spelling)
- Difficulty with handwriting

Other common symptoms that occur with dyslexia

- Difficulty naming colors, objects, and letters rapidly, in a sequence (RAN: Rapid Automatized Naming)
- Weak working memory for lists, directions, math facts, sequencing events
- Needs to see or hear concepts many times to learn them
- Distracted by visual or auditory stimuli
- Downward trend in achievement test scores or school performance
- Inconsistent school work
- Relatives may have similar learning problems

A comprehensive evaluation for dyslexia should include:

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| • Family history of dyslexia | • Phonological processing |
| • History of delayed speech or language | • Automaticity/fluency skills |
| • Word recognition | • Reading comprehension |
| • Decoding | • Vocabulary knowledge |
| • Spelling | |