

THE YALE CENTER FOR DYSLEXIA & CREATIVITY

Transforming dyslexia from a liability to an asset.

SIGNS OF DYSLEXIA

The Preschool Years

- Trouble learning common nursery rhymes, such as “Jack and Jill”
- Difficulty learning (and remembering) the names of letters in the alphabet
- Seems to be unable to recognize letters in his/her own name
- Mispronounces familiar words; persistent “baby talk”
- Doesn’t recognize rhyming patterns like cat, bat, rat

Kindergarten & First Grade

Reading

- Reading errors that show no connection to the sounds of the letters on the page—will say “puppy” instead of the written word “dog” in an illustrated page with a dog shown
- Does not understand that words come apart
- Complains about how hard reading is, or “disappearing” when it is time to read
- A history of reading problems in parents or siblings.

Speaking

- Cannot sound out even simple words like cat, map, nap
- Does not associate letters with sounds, such as the letter b with the “b” sound

Strengths

- Curiosity
- A great imagination
- The ability to figure things out
- Eager embrace of new ideas
- Getting the gist of things
- A good understanding of new concepts
- Surprising maturity
- A larger vocabulary for the age group
- Enjoyment in solving puzzles
- Talent at building models
- Excellent comprehension of stories read or told to him

Second Grade and Up

Reading

- Very slow in acquiring reading skills. Reading is slow and awkward
- Trouble reading unfamiliar words, often making wild guesses because he cannot sound out the word.
- Doesn’t seem to have a strategy for reading new words
- Avoids reading out loud

Speaking

- Searches for a specific word and ends up using vague language such as “stuff” or “thing” a lot, without name the object?
- Pauses, hesitates, and/or uses lots of “umm’s” when speaking
- Confuses words that sound alike, such as saying “tornado” for “volcano,” substituting “lotion” for “ocean.”
- Mispronunciation of long, unfamiliar, or complicated words
- Seems to need extra time to respond to questions.

School and Life

- Trouble with remembering dates, names, telephone numbers, random lists.
- Has trouble finishing tests on time
- Extreme difficulty learning a foreign language
- Messy handwriting
- Low self-esteem that may not be immediately visible

Strengths

- Excellent thinking skills: conceptualization, reasoning, imagination, abstraction
- Learning that is accomplished best through meaning rather than rote memorization
- Ability to get the “big picture”
- A high level of understanding of what is read to him
- The ability to read and to understand at a high level overlearned (that is, highly practiced) words in a special area of interest; for example, if his hobby is restoring cars, he may be able to read auto mechanic magazines
- Improvement as an area of interest becomes more specialized and focused, when he develops a miniature vocabulary that he can read
- A surprisingly sophisticated listening vocabulary
- Excellence in areas not dependent on reading, such as math, computers, and visual arts, or excellence in more conceptual (versus factoid-driven) subjects such as philosophy, biology, social studies, neuroscience, and creative writing

Young Adults & Adults

Reading

- A childhood history of reading and spelling difficulties
- While reading skills have developed over time, reading still requires great effort and is done at a slow pace
- Rarely reads for pleasure
- Slow reading of most materials—books, manuals, subtitles in films
- Avoids reading aloud

Speaking

- Not fluent, not glib, often anxious while speaking
- Pausing or hesitating often when speaking
- using lots of “um’s” during speaking, lack of glibness
- using imprecise language, for example, “stuff,” “things,” instead of the proper name of an object
- Often pronounces the names of people and places incorrectly; trips over parts of words
- Difficulty remembering names of people and places; confuses names that sound alike
- Struggles to retrieve words; has the “it was on the tip of my tongue” moment frequently
- Rarely has a fast response in conversations and/or writing; struggles when put on the spot
- Spoken vocabulary is smaller than listening vocabulary
- Avoids saying words that might be mispronounced
- Earlier oral language difficulties persist

School & Life

- Despite good grades, will often say that she is dumb or is concerned that peers think that she is dumb
- Penalized by multiple choice tests
- Frequently sacrifices social life for studying
- Suffers extreme fatigue when reading
- Performs rote clerical tasks poorly

Strengths

- The maintenance of strengths noted in the school-age period
- A high learning capability
- A noticeable improvement when given additional time on multiple-choice examinations
- Noticeable excellence when focused on a highly specialized area such as medicine, law, public policy, finance, architecture, or basic science
- Excellence in writing if content and not spelling is important
- A noticeable articulateness in the expression of ideas and feelings
- Exceptional empathy and warmth, and feeling for others
- Success in areas not dependent on rote memory
- A talent for high-level conceptualization and the ability to come up with original insights
- Big-picture thinking
- Inclination to think outside of the box
- A noticeable resilience and ability to adapt