

**MYTH vs. FACT**  
www.DyslexiaMaine.com

The Basics

**Myth:** Dyslexia does not exist

**Fact:** Dyslexia is one of the most researched and documented conditions that will impact children. Over 30 years of independent, scientific, replicated, published research exists on dyslexia - much of it done through the National Institutes of Health, funded by taxpayer dollars.

Some of that research is quoted on <http://www.dys-add.com/dyslexia.html#anchorMyth>. Take a look at the [Dyslexia Fact Sheet](#) published by the International Dyslexia Association.

**Myth:** Dyslexia is rare

**Fact:** According to the NIH researchers, in the United States, dyslexia impacts 20% of our population. That's 1 out of every 5 people.

But it does come in degrees. Some have it only mildly, some have it moderately, some have it severely, and some have it profoundly.

Very few children with dyslexia are in the special education system. Only 1 in 10 will be eligible for an IEP (when tested in second or third grade) under the category of Learning Disability (LD).

**That means 9 out of 10 “fall through the cracks.”** Although the parents and the teacher know there's something different about the child, the child does not qualify for special education services, and most will no longer get help from the reading specialist after first or second grade.

Dyslexia is not rare. **It is the most common reason a child will struggle first with spelling, then with written expression, and eventually “hit the wall” in reading development by third grade.**

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**Myth:** Dyslexia is a “catch all” term

**Fact:** That was true back in the 1960's and 1970's before the research existed. But we now have a research-based definition of dyslexia, which is:

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 growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.

**Myth:** Dyslexia affects four times more boys than girls

**Fact:** Although more boys are sent for testing than girls, research shows that dyslexia impacts just as many girls as boys.

So why are more boys sent for testing than girls? It's because of their behavior.

It seems when boys in first, second, or third grade can't do classroom assignments or homework, they get frustrated and act out their frustration. Parents and teachers notice that behavior and then try to figure out why they are behaving that way - by sending them for testing.

But often, when girls in first, second, or third grade can't do the work, they tend to get quiet, move to the back of the room, and try to become invisible. So they don't get noticed as early. Often, their dyslexia is not discovered until high school or even college.

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**Myth:** People with dyslexia see things backwards

**Fact:** People with dyslexia **do not see things backwards**. They see things the same way you and I do.

Dyslexia is not caused by a vision problem. That is why vision therapy does not work for this population. There is nothing wrong with their eyes.

Yes, they reverse their b's and their d's and say "was" for "saw." But that's caused by their lifelong confusion over left versus right and by their difficulty reading by sounding out.

**Myth:** Children outgrow dyslexia

**Fact:** Dyslexia is a lifelong issue. That means waiting - due to a false hope that it will disappear as the child gets older - is the worst thing you can do.

It will not go away. The child will only get further and further behind - unless that child gets the right type of intervention or tutoring.

All the experts agree: **Waiting is the worst thing you can do.**

There are [effective research-based methods](#) that will bring their reading, spelling, and writing skills up to - and beyond - grade level.

Although it is never too late to greatly improve their skills, [early intervention](#) is the best way to prevent or minimize the damage to their self-esteem, their emotional distress, and their fear of going to school.

**Myth:** Any child who reverses letters or numbers has dyslexia

**Fact:** Most children will reverse some of their letters and some of their numbers while they are learning. Up to a certain point, that is considered perfectly normal.

But those reversals should be gone after two years of handwriting instruction and practice.

But letter or number reversals that continue **after** two years of handwriting instruction and practice are a classic warning sign of dyslexia.

If a child truly has dyslexia, however, the child will have many of the other [classic warning signs of dyslexia](#).

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## Diagnosis of Dyslexia

**Myth:** There is no way to diagnose dyslexia

**Fact:** Professionals with in-depth training can accurately diagnose dyslexia as early as age 5.

To learn who should - and who should not - test for dyslexia, the types of tests that are given, and the types of errors and difficulties that a tester is looking for, go to [www.dys-add.com](http://www.dys-add.com)

**Myth:** Dyslexia is a medical diagnosis

**Fact:** Doctors do not test for dyslexia. Dyslexia is not classified as a medical problem. Doctors have no training in how to test for reading, spelling, and writing problems. And there is no medical solution (no pill or operation) for those types of academic struggles. That is also why medical insurance does not cover anything having to do with dyslexia. Dyslexia is not classified as a medical issue.

The International Dyslexia Association publishes a [Fact Sheet on Testing](#).  
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**Myth:** Dyslexia cannot be diagnosed until third grade

**Fact:** Professionals with in-depth training can accurately diagnose dyslexia as early as age 5.

**Myth:** If you don't teach a child to read by age 9, it is too late.

**Fact:** **It is never ever too late to greatly improve the reading, spelling, and writing skills of someone with dyslexia.**

**Myth:** Intelligence and ability to read are related. So if someone doesn't read well, they can't be very smart.

**Related Myth:** Gifted children cannot be dyslexic or have a learning disability.

**Fact:** Dyslexia is not related to IQ. That means you can have a very high IQ and be dyslexic, you can have an average IQ and be dyslexic, and you can have low IQ and be dyslexic.

Many people with dyslexia are very bright and accomplish amazing things as adults.

You can find many lists with [over 200 famous dyslexics](#).

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## Dyslexia and Reading & Spelling

**Myth:** People with dyslexia cannot read

**Fact:** Everyone with dyslexia can read - up to a point. But they will "hit the wall" in reading development by third grade, if not sooner. When reading, they have great difficulty sounding out an unknown word - despite being taught phonics. They will often read a word fine on one page, but not recognize the very same word on the next page.

But it is spelling that separates kids with dyslexia from kids who struggle with reading for some other reason. If the child and their parents spend hours and hours studying the spelling list, the child may be able to learn the list of 20 spelling words long enough to do “okay” on Friday's test. But they cannot retain those spelling words from one week to the next.

They also cannot spell when writing sentences or paragraphs - not even the high frequency words such as “because,” “friend,” or “does.” That's why extreme difficulty with spelling is considered a classic warning sign of dyslexia - and why the International Dyslexia Association publishes a [Fact Sheet on Spelling](#).

**Myth:** Most children outgrow early reading and spelling problems. It is just a developmental delay

**Fact:** Independent, scientific, replicated research on reading development shows **just the opposite**. It shows that if a child is struggling with reading, writing, and spelling in mid-first grade, that child has better than 90% odds of still struggling with those skills in eighth grade and on into adulthood if someone doesn't step in and do something. That means less than 10% of the time will a child outgrow those struggles. That also means [waiting is the worst thing you can do](#). The child is only going to get further and further behind.

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**Myth:** Every child who struggles with reading is dyslexic

**Fact:** Dyslexia is not the only reason a child will struggle with reading, but it is the most common reason.

How can you tell whether dyslexia is the cause of the child's reading struggles?

Dyslexia will impact way more than just reading. It will impact:

**their spelling:** trouble retaining spelling words from one week to the next; not able to spell even the high frequency words like because, friend or does when writing sentences

**their speech:** mixing up sounds in multisyllable words such as animal, spaghetti, helicopter, cinnamon, consonant, caterpillar, hamburger, magazine, hospital—and trouble making the R and L sounds correctly

**and cause extreme difficulty memorizing sequences...** : the sequence of the alphabet, the letters in their last name, the days of the week, the months of the year

**...and random facts:** such as multiplication tables

The more warning signs a child has, the more confident you can be that dyslexia is the cause of their academic struggles. Go to

[resources/RecentResearch/DysWarningSigns.pdf](http://www.dys-resources/RecentResearch/DysWarningSigns.pdf)<http://www.dys->

[add.com/dyslexia.html#anchorMyth](http://www.dys-add.com/dyslexia.html#anchorMyth) for a summary of the classic warning signs of dyslexia.

**Myth:** Dyslexia is caused by a lack of phonics instruction

**Fact:** That is not true. Phonics is not the answer for a child with dyslexia. The teacher can use the best phonics program in the world, but it will not prevent a child with dyslexia from “hitting the wall” by third grade.

Most parents already know that phonics does not help. Most parents have already tried “Hooked on Phonics” - and it did not improve their child's reading or spelling.

Children with dyslexia can learn phonics. They just can't apply it. That's why a [classic warning sign of dyslexia](#) is a child who can not sound out an unknown word - despite being taught phonics.

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### Overcoming Dyslexia

**Myth:** Retaining a child will improve their academic struggles

**Fact:** Retention is a failed educational policy. It has **never** improved academic struggles. That's why these organizations are **against** retention.

The National Association of School Psychologists:

“Through many years of research, the practice of retaining children has been shown to be ineffective in meeting the needs of children who are academically delayed.”

The American Federation of Teachers:

“Social promotion and grade retention are mechanical responses to an educational problem. The scandal is how little attention they give to preventing failure in the first place.”

The U.S. Department of Education:

“Neither social promotion nor retention is appropriate for students who do not meet high academic standards.”

The National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD):

**“The weight of the evidence of literally hundreds of studies shows that retaining children does NOT produce higher achievement.”**

For links to these studies,

<http://www.wrightslaw.com/advoc/articles/promote.retain.htm><http://www.wrightslaw.com/advoc/articles/promote.retain.htm>

**Myth:** If a dyslexic child reads out loud for 20 minutes a day, it will improve their reading

**Fact:** Reading out loud will not teach a dyslexic child how to sound out unknown words. They will continue to try to memorize the shape of a word, and use picture clues or context clues to guess at the words.

If a child cannot easily and accurately sound out unknown words, especially multi-syllable words, by the time the child starts third grade, that child will “hit the wall” in reading development.

Reading out loud for 20 minutes a day will not teach that missing skill—reading by sounding out, which is also called “decoding” or “word attack.”

The inability to decode is caused by weak phonemic awareness skills. Part of the research-based definition of dyslexia is a child who lacks age appropriate [phonemic awareness](#) skills.

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**Myth:** Dyslexic children will never read well, so it is best to teach them to compensate.

**Fact:** People with dyslexia can become excellent readers, decent spellers, and good writers if they receive the right type of intervention or tutoring.

Independent, scientific, replicated research recommends an [Orton-Gillingham based system](#) as the most effective way to improve the reading, writing, and spelling skills of people with dyslexia.

That's why the International Dyslexia Association publishes two [fact sheets](#) on Orton-Gillingham.

There are [seven well-known Orton-Gillingham based systems](#). The [Barton Reading & Spelling System](#) is one of the best.

**Myth:** Children with dyslexia are just lazy. If only they tried harder...

**Fact:** If students with dyslexia do not receive the right type of tutoring and classroom accommodations, they often struggle in school - despite being bright, motivated, and spending hours on homework assignments.

Article excerpt from **The Huntsville Times**, published February 11, 2008:

John Colby Whisante has dyslexia. Even though he sometimes fails, he will not give up on his education. He wrote this open letter to educators:

You have questioned my abilities and my need for help. You have even questioned my diagnosis of dyslexia.

You have no concept of the effort and time it takes for me to achieve my accomplishments because you have never allowed me what I need to show my full potential.

I could give up and walk away from getting an education, but I am not a quitter. I may fail in the beginning, but I will keep on trying until I succeed. I will not allow you to defeat me.

As my school official, you have choices. You can assist me in getting an education by making accommodations that have been proven to help me, or you can allow me to fail and hope I will go away. Even if you turn your back on me, I will not go away.

To read the entire article, <http://www.dys-add.com/resources/Myths/JohnColbyWhisante.pdf>

\*The above information is from <http://www.dys-add.com/index.html> where you can find many more links to excellent research, best practices and more.