

Signs & Symptoms of Dyslexia

A Quick-Reference Guide for Parents & Teachers, by Age & Stage

The Preschool Years	Kindergarten & First Grade
▶ Trouble learning common nursery rhymes, such as “Jack and Jill” ▶ Difficulty learning and remembering the names of letters ▶ Seems unable to recognize letters in his/her own name ▶ Mispronounces familiar words; persistent “baby talk” ▶ Doesn't recognize rhyming patterns, like cat, bat, rat	▶ Reading errors with no connection to letter sounds ▶ Does not understand that words come apart into sounds ▶ Complains reading is hard; “disappears” at reading time ▶ A history of reading problems in parents or siblings ▶ Cannot sound out simple words like cat, map, nap ▶ Does not associate letters with sounds (e.g., b with “b”) ▶ A family history of reading and/or spelling difficulties
2nd Grade Through High School	Young Adults & Adults
▶ Reading is slow, effortful, and awkward; guesses at unfamiliar words ▶ No clear strategy for sounding out new words; avoids reading aloud ▶ Searches for words; uses vague language like “stuff” or “thing” ▶ Mispronounces long or unfamiliar words; needs extra time to respond ▶ Trouble with dates, names, phone numbers, or lists; struggles on timed tests ▶ Extreme difficulty with foreign language; poor spelling, messy handwriting	▶ Childhood history of reading/spelling difficulty; reading is still slow and effortful ▶ Rarely reads for pleasure; avoids reading aloud ▶ Word-retrieval struggles (“tip of the tongue”); frequent “um's” ▶ Mispronounces names or places; confuses similar-sounding words ▶ Penalized by multiple-choice or timed tests; extreme fatigue when reading ▶ Despite good grades, may feel “dumb” or worry peers think so
A Note for Families: Every child is different, and showing a few of these signs does not necessarily mean a child has dyslexia. If several signs are present and persistent, it may be worth a conversation with your child's teacher, doctor, or a structured literacy specialist.	

SOURCE & CITATION

Signs and symptoms adapted from Sally Shaywitz, M.D., & Jonathan Shaywitz, M.D., *Overcoming Dyslexia: Second Edition, Completely Revised and Updated* (Knopf, 2020), pp. 142–148, as reprinted by the Yale Center for Dyslexia & Creativity.

Yale Center for Dyslexia & Creativity, “Signs of Dyslexia,” dyslexia.yale.edu/dyslexia/signs-of-dyslexia (accessed August 2026).

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