

Signs of dyslexia at different ages

By the Understood Team

We partner with [Understood.org](https://www.understood.org) to provide educators and families with expert-vetted, evidence-based resources about learning differences.

Many people know that **dyslexia** is a challenge with reading. But it's more than that. Dyslexia is a challenge with language. That can make it hard to spot the signs. For instance, trouble with rhyming can be a sign of trouble with reading.

Dyslexia can also cause trouble with spelling, **speaking**, and writing. So signs can show up in a few areas, not just in reading.

People with dyslexia don't all struggle in the same way. Some have a hard time with early reading skills like sounding out words (decoding). Some read words and sentences fine, but they have trouble understanding what they read.

Dyslexia can also look different as kids get older. Learn common signs of dyslexia at different ages and how to help.

Watch a video of this article

Want a read-aloud version of this article? Watch [this video](#).

Preschool signs of dyslexia

- Mispronouncing words, like saying *beddy tear* instead of *teddy bear*
- Struggling to name familiar objects and using general words like *thing* and *stuff* instead
- Having a hard time learning nursery rhymes or song lyrics that rhyme

- Having trouble remembering sequences, like singing the letters of the alphabet
- Telling stories that are hard to follow or having trouble talking about an event in a logical order
- Having difficulty remembering and **following directions** with multiple steps

Grades K–2 signs of dyslexia

- Having trouble learning letter names and remembering the sounds they make
- Often confusing letters that look similar (like *b*, *d*, *p*, and *q*) or sound similar (like *f* and *v*, *b* and *p*, or *d* and *t*)
- Struggling to read familiar words (like *cat*), especially if there aren't pictures
- Substituting words when reading aloud, like saying *house* when the story says *home*
- Having trouble separating the individual sounds in words and blending sounds to make a word
- Having trouble remembering how words are spelled and applying **spelling rules** in writing

Grades 3–5 signs of dyslexia

- Confusing or skipping small words like *for* and *of* when reading aloud
- Having trouble sounding out new words
- Having trouble quickly recognizing common words (also called **sight words**)
- Struggling to explain what happened in a story or answer questions about key details
- Frequently making the same kinds of mistakes, like **reversing letters**
- Having poor spelling, like spelling the same word correctly and incorrectly in the same exercise
- Avoiding reading whenever possible or getting frustrated or upset when reading

Tween, teen, and adult signs of dyslexia

- Reading slowly or leaving out small words and parts of longer words when reading aloud
- Struggling to remember common abbreviations, including ones on social media
- Often searching for words or using substitutes like *gate* instead of *fence*
- Often not “getting” the joke or having trouble understanding idioms and puns
- Taking a very long time to complete reading assignments
- Having an easier time answering questions about a page of text if it's read aloud

Having these challenges can be tough on kids and adults. They may think they're not smart because they're struggling when most people aren't. But trouble with reading doesn't mean someone isn't smart. That's just one of the many [myths about dyslexia](#).

Struggling readers often feel like they're the only one. But dyslexia is a very common learning difference, and many kids and adults need extra help learning to read. The good news is that there are [ways to teach struggling readers](#), and skills can improve.

Download a fact sheet on signs of dyslexia

Share [this one-page resource](#) with teachers, friends, or family.

If you think your child has dyslexia, here are [next steps to take for school-age kids](#). And if you think *you* might have dyslexia, here are [next steps for adults](#).

Author

The Understood Team is made up of passionate writers and editors. Many of them have kids who learn and think differently.

Reviewer

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