**<https://www.additudemag.com/dyslexia-in-adults-symptoms-learning-disability/>**

**What Is Dyslexia?**

**Dyslexia is one of the most common — and well-known — learning disabilities. Learn the signs and symptoms, and how you can get an accurate diagnosis.**

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**What is Dyslexia?**

* The term [dyslexia](https://www.additudemag.com/adhd/article/11053.html) refers to the specific learning disability associated with reading.
* Contrary to popular belief, [dyslexia](https://www.additudemag.com/dyslexia-symptoms-test-children/) is not simply reading letters or words backward — though some people with the condition will certainly struggle with this. In reality, dyslexia manifests in many different ways.

Some people may have difficulty with phonemic awareness; they can’t easily recognize and break down the sounds of letters, or segment words into syllables. A patient with dyslexia might report that he reads the word “doctor” as “do-ctor,” instead of “doc-tor,” for example. Rhyming and fast, effortless recognition of sight words (”the,” “and,” “it,” etc.) are also common problems that affect the rate, accuracy, fluency, and [comprehension of text](https://www.additudemag.com/slideshow/161/slide-1.html).

Retrieving already known words can be challenging for a person with dyslexia, and the rapid naming of letters, objects, colors, and pictures may be impaired, too. Learning the alphabet is often more difficult for children with the condition. Dyslexia can be confusing for outside observers, especially because symptoms often coexist with high verbal abilities.

“We tend to expect good speakers to be good readers,” says [Roberto Olivardia, Ph.D.](https://www.additudemag.com/author/roberto-olivardia-ph-d/) “But this is not the case with dyslexics.” Other challenges include spelling, cursive writing, foreign languages, and any information that relies on rote memory (phone numbers, addresses, multiplication tables, etc.).

More than 90 percent of American adults have heard of dyslexia and recognize it as a real difficulty. It affects about 6 percent of the population, though [some studies](https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/reading/conditioninfo/pages/risk.aspx) demonstrate that nearly 20 percent of Americans may have some symptoms. Its cause is not fully understood — though like other learning disabilities, it appears to be highly genetic.

**Symptoms of Dyslexia**

Although the severity and symptoms of dyslexia can vary from person to person, common markers include:

* Struggles with phonemic awareness, or the ability to differentiate between and use individual sounds in words
* Slow or distorted phonological processing, or differentiating between various phonemes (or “speech sounds”)
* Reading or writing letters or words out of order
* Reading slowly or painfully
* Difficulty sounding out unknown words
* Misuse or total disregard of punctuation
* Difficulty mastering correct spelling or age-appropriate vocabulary
* Difficulty recalling known words
* Substitution of sight words for one another (replacing “the” with “he,” for example)

Dyslexia isn’t a childhood disorder, and symptoms will continue to manifest into adulthood. If someone with the condition flies under the radar throughout childhood, they may develop various coping mechanisms as they age to make their symptoms less noticeable and easier to manage.

**What Does Dyslexia Look Like in Adults?**

**Dyslexia isn’t just for kids. Learn the signs of this common learning disability in adults, and what you can do to pursue a diagnosis later in life.**

[Dyslexia](https://www.additudemag.com/dyslexia-symptoms-test-adults/) is the most common learning disability — affecting up to 20 percent of the population — but that doesn’t mean it’s always properly diagnosed. Many [children who struggle through school](https://www.additudemag.com/adhd/article/12220.html) without a diagnosis grow up to become adults who don’t know they have dyslexia — even though the challenges it brings still affect their lives everyday.

Dyslexia can impact [your career](https://www.additudemag.com/adhd/article/1497.html), your relationships, and your self-esteem, so if you’re struggling, it’s important that you pursue a diagnosis — and much-needed peace of mind. Check out these common symptoms of dyslexia — broken down between home and the workplace — to determine if your life-long challenges may be the result of a distinct learning disability.

**Symptoms at Home**

Dyslexia mostly affects reading, spelling, and how we process information — but those difficulties can pop up in unexpected ways. Some possible symptoms of dyslexia in your day-to-day life may include:

* Difficulty recalling past conversations; often accused of “not listening”
* Trouble remembering names
* Mispronouncing words when speaking, or misspelling words when writing, without realizing
* Confusing visually similar words like “can” and “cab”
* Avoiding reading whenever possible, or preferring short articles or essays over long novels
* Struggling to pronounce unknown words when reading out loud
* Reliant on spouse, children, or family members to help with written correspondence
* Getting lost easily, particularly with written directions
* Becoming self-conscious when speaking to a group; using filler words or starting and stopping sentences repeatedly

**Symptoms at Work**

Often, adults with undiagnosed dyslexia may find that they gravitate toward jobs that require as little reading as possible. Other possible indicators of dyslexia in the workplace can include:

* Resisting reading out loud during meetings
* Avoiding public speaking whenever possible
* Often has to read emails or memos several times before comprehending
* Disliking unfamiliar fonts or handwritten materials
* Randomly placing capital letters in words when writing by hand
* Relying too much on spell-check and other computer-based writing tools
* Becoming bored or distracted easily when reading long documents
* Shying away from planning meetings, events, or other projects that rely on time management
* Disliking administrative work like repetitive forms

### Academic Interventions for Dyslexia

If dyslexia is diagnosed during childhood, parents and school specialists can set up in-classroom [accommodations](https://www.additudemag.com/iep-accommodations-what-works-for-us/) designed to help the student catch up and get back on track in reading. If your child is granted an [Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or a 504 Plan](https://www.additudemag.com/iep-step-5-evaluate-your-options/), the school’s team will likely propose some strategies to accommodate your child’s dyslexia — and you shouldn’t be afraid to suggest a few of your own! Some tried-and-true school-based interventions include:

– **Provide vocabulary and summaries ahead of time.** This gives the student a chance to look over the pre-reading material on her own time — feeling more confident and prepared when the actual reading assignment begins.

– **Encourage all students to mark up text** with markers, sticky notes, or anything else to help students sort, arrange, and highlight important concepts in the text.

– **Provide audio versions of the material**, whenever possible. Reading along to a book on tape can be beneficial for students with dyslexia.

– **Provide alternative materials** such as books with similar content at a more appropriate reading level.

– **Use mnemonic devices** to help students with rote memorization.

– **Go high-tech.** [Assistive technology](https://www.additudemag.com/change-the-program/) — like text-to-speech software or electronic spellcheckers — can help your child complete assignments and build up weak skills. Several smartphone apps also help children improve reading skills, aimed at various age groups.

### Workplace Interventions

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), adults with dyslexia are entitled to reasonable accommodations from their employers to compensate for the condition. Some common accommodations for dyslexia in the workplace include:

– **Make use of assistive technologies.** Smartphone apps, computer programs, and other high-tech solutions can be used to counter dyslexia’s challenges in the workplace. Try text-to-speech software to help you read long documents, or word prediction software to help make daily reading and writing tasks quicker.

– **Provide materials for meetings or presentations ahead of time.** Being allowed to prepare for big meetings in advance can help you feel more confident — and less likely to be blindsided by a question from the CEO.

– **Ask a co-worker to proofread important documents** before you send them. This can help you avoid the small spelling or grammar mistakes that are often viewed as “unprofessional.”

– **Ask for summaries when possible.** If it’s not absolutely necessary for you to read every word of a 30-page report, ask your boss if someone could summarize the key points for you.

– **Make use of larger print, different fonts, and different colored paper.** Simple changes to a document can make it easier for someone with dyslexia to read, without negative effects on anyone else. If you prefer a certain font or text color, ask that your co-workers use it when sending you emails or reports. It’s a small change that can go a long way!