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What is Dyslexia?

The following quick summary has been produced by Sound Readers™ with information from the International Dyslexia Association. For more information, go to: www.interdys.org.

- Dyslexia is a 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.

Studies show that individuals with dyslexia process information in a different area of the brain than do non-dyslexics.

Many people who are dyslexic are of average to above average intelligence.

10-15% of the population has dyslexia.

Dyslexia is the most common cause of reading, writing and spelling difficulties.

Dyslexia affects males and females nearly equally, and people from different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds as well.

If children who are dyslexic get effective phonological training in Kindergarten and 1st grade, they will have significantly fewer problems in learning to read at grade level than do children who are not identified or helped until 3rd grade.

It is never too late for individuals with dyslexia to learn to read.

Research shows that programs utilizing multisensory structured language techniques can help children and adults learn to read.

The causes for dyslexia are neurobiological and genetic. Chances are that one of the child's parents, grandparents, aunts, or uncles is dyslexic.

Dyslexia is not a disease. There is no cure. With proper diagnosis, appropriate instruction, hard work and support from family, teachers, friends, and others, individuals who are dyslexic can succeed in school and later as working adults.

The only way to verify that an individual is dyslexic is through testing by a qualified examiner/s.

To find a *qualified examiner*, begin by looking for a psychologist who diagnoses learning disabilities.

More about Dyslexia

► **What causes dyslexia?** The exact causes of dyslexia are still not completely clear, but anatomical and brain imagery studies show differences in the way the brain of a dyslexic person develops and functions. Moreover, people with dyslexia have been found to have problems with discriminating sounds within a word, a key factor in their reading difficulties. Dyslexia is not due to either lack of intelligence or a desire to learn; with appropriate teaching methods, dyslexics can learn to read.

► **How widespread is dyslexia?** Current studies suggest that 15-20% of the population has a reading disability. Of those, 85% has dyslexia. Dyslexia occurs in people of all backgrounds and intellectual levels. In addition, dyslexia runs in families; dyslexic parents are very likely to have children who are dyslexic. Some people are identified as dyslexic early in their lives, but for others their dyslexia goes unidentified until they get older. People who are very bright can be dyslexic. They are often gifted in areas that do not require strong language skills, such as art, computer science, design, drama, electronics, math, mechanics, music, physics, sales, and sports.

► **What are the effects of dyslexia?** The impact that dyslexia has is different for each person. The most common effects are problems with reading, spelling, and writing. Some dyslexics do not have much difficulty with early reading and spelling tasks but do experience great problems when more complex language skills are required, such as grammar, understanding textbook material, & writing.

People with dyslexia can also have problems with spoken language. They may find it difficult to express themselves clearly, or to fully comprehend what others mean when they speak.

Dyslexia can also affect a person's self-image. Students with dyslexia often end up feeling "dumb" and less capable than they actually are.

► **How is dyslexia diagnosed?** A formal evaluation is needed to discover if a person is dyslexic. It is used to determine whether or not a student is reading at the expected level, and takes into account the individual's family background and overall school performance. The testing can be conducted by trained school or outside specialists like psychologists.

► **What are the signs of dyslexia?** Problems involve difficulties in acquiring and using language -- reading and writing letters in the wrong order is just one manifestation of dyslexia and does not occur in all cases. Other problems include:

- Learning to speak
- Organizing written and spoken language
- Learning letters and their sounds
- Memorizing number facts, and/or correctly doing math operations
- Spelling
- Reading
- Learning a foreign language

Not all students who have difficulties with these skills are dyslexic.

Formal testing is the only way to confirm a diagnosis of suspected dyslexia.

► **How is dyslexia treated?** Dyslexia is a life-long condition. With proper help people with dyslexia can learn to read and/or write well. **Early identification and treatment is the key** to helping dyslexics achieve in school and in life. Most people with dyslexia need help from a teacher, tutor, or therapist specially trained in using a multisensory, structured language approach. Schools can implement academic modifications to help dyslexic students succeed. For example, a student with dyslexia can be given extra time to complete tasks, or help with taking notes.

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