

## ***Clues to Dyslexia Checklist***

The early warning clues for recognizing dyslexia **are** manifested in both weaknesses and strengths. Below are clues which are evident at various stages of the child's development. If the student displays several of the characteristics for dyslexia, a referral for testing may be recommended. Use the following checklist as a guideline.

### **Early Childhood (2-5 years)**

The earliest clues involve mostly spoken language. The very first clue to a language (and reading) problem may be delayed language. Once the child begins to speak, look for the following problems:

- Trouble learning common nursery rhymes like "Jack and Jill" and "Humpty Dumpty"
- A lack of appreciation of rhymes
- Mispronounced words; persistent baby talk
- Difficulty in learning and remembering names of letters
- Failure to know the letters in his own name

### **Kindergarten and First Grade (5-7 years)**

- Failure to understand that words come apart  
ex: "**batboy**" – can be "**bat**" and "**boy**" and later on, that the word bat can be broken down still further and sounded out as **[b] [a] [t]**
- Inability to learn to associate letter with sounds, such as being unable to connect the letter **b** with the "**b**" sound
- Reading errors that show no connection to the sounds of the letters  
ex: the word "**big**" is read as "**goat**"
- The inability to read common one-syllable words or to sound out the simplest of words, such as "**mat, cat, hop, nap**"
- Complains about how hard reading is or avoids reading
- A history of reading problems in parents or siblings

***Parents should also be looking for these indications of strengths in higher-level thinking processes:***

- Curiosity
- A great imagination
- The ability to figure things out
- Eager to embrace new ideas
- Getting at the gist of things
- A good understanding of new concepts

- Surprising maturity
- A large vocabulary for the age group
- Enjoyment in solving puzzles
- Talent at building models
- Excellent comprehension of stories read or told to him

### From Second Grade and On (7 + years)

#### Problems in Speaking

Mispronunciation of long, unfamiliar, or complicated words; the fracturing of words leaving out parts of words or confusing the order of the parts of words

ex: “aluminum” becomes “amulium”

Speech that is not fluent – pausing or hesitating often when speaking, lots of “um’s” during speech

The use of imprecise language, such as vague references to “**stuff**” or “**things**” instead of the proper name of an object

Not being able to find the exact words, such as confusing words that sound alike

ex: saying “**tornado**” instead of “**volcano**”, substituting “**lotion**” for “**ocean**”

The need for time to summon an oral response or the inability to come up with a verbal response quickly when questioned

Difficulty in remembering dates, names, telephone numbers, random lists

#### Problems in Reading

Very slow progress in acquiring reading skills

The lack of a strategy to read new words

Trouble reading “**unknown**” (new, unfamiliar) words that must be sounded out; making wild stabs or guesses at reading a word; failure to systematically sound out words

The inability to read small “**function**” words such as “**that, an, in**”

Stumbling on reading multi-syllable words, or the failure to come close to sounding out the full word

Omitting parts of words when reading; the failure to decode parts within a word, as if someone had chewed a hole in the middle of the word ex: “**conible**” for “**convertible**”

A terrific fear of reading out loud; the avoidance of oral reading

Oral reading filled with substitutions, omissions, and mispronunciations

Oral reading that is choppy and labored, not smooth or fluent

Oral reading that lacks inflection and sounds like the reading of a foreign language

A reliance on context to discern the meaning of what is read

- A better ability to read to understand words in **“context”** than to read **“isolated”** single words
- Disproportionately poor performance on multiple choice tests
- The inability to finish tests on time
- The substitution of words with the same meaning for words in the text he can't pronounce, such as **“car”** for **“automobile”**
- Disastrous spelling, with words not resembling true spelling; some spellings may be missed by spell check
- Trouble reading mathematics word problems
- Reading that is very slow and tiring
- Homework that never seems to end, or with parents often recruited as readers
- Messy handwriting
- Extreme difficulty learning a foreign language
- A lack of enjoyment in reading, and the avoidance of reading books or even a sentence
- Reading accuracy improves over time, though it continues to lack fluency and is laborious
- Lowered self-esteem
- A history of reading, spelling, and foreign language problems in family members

***Signs of Strength in Higher-Level Thinking Processes:***

- Excellent thinking skills: conceptualization, reasoning, imagination, abstraction
- Learning that is accomplished best through meaning rather than rote memorization
- Ability to get the “big picture”
- The ability to read and to understand at a high level in a special area of interest ex: If his hobby is restoring cars, he may be able to read auto mechanic magazines
- Development of a miniature vocabulary in an area of interest
- A surprisingly sophisticated listening vocabulary
- Excellence in areas not dependent on reading
- Ability to enlist the aid of others

## **Young Adults and Adults**

### **Problems in Speaking**

- Persistence of earlier oral language difficulties
- The mispronunciations of the names of people and places
- Difficulty remembering names of people and places
- A struggle to retrieve words: "It was on the tip of my tongue"
- Lack of spontaneity, especially if put on the spot
- Spoken vocabulary that is smaller than listening vocabulary with hesitation to say words that might be mispronounced

### **Problems in Reading**

- A childhood history of reading and spelling difficulties that persist
- Word reading becomes more accurate over time but continues to require great effort
- Lack of fluency
- Embarrassment caused by oral reading
- Trouble reading and pronouncing uncommon, strange, or unique words such as names
- The substitution of words during reading for words that cannot be pronounced
- Extreme fatigue from reading
- Poor performance on multiple-choice tests
- Unusually long hours spent reading school or work-related material
- Sacrifice of social life
- A preference for books with figures, charts, or graphics
- A preference for books with fewer words per page or with lots of white showing on a page
- Disinclination to read for pleasure
- Poor performance on rote clerical tasks

### ***Strengths in Higher-Level Thinking Processes***

- Maintenance of strengths noted in the school-age period
- High learning capability
- Noticeable improvement when given additional time on multiple-choice exams
- Noticeable excellence when focused on a highly specialized area
- Excellence in writing if content and not spelling is important
- Noticeable articulation in the expression of ideas and feelings
- Exceptional empathy
- Success in areas not dependent on rote memory
- Talent for high-level conceptualization and the ability to come up with original insights
- Big-picture thinking
- Inclination to think "**out of the box**"
- Noticeable resilience and ability to adapt