



What causes dyslexia?

-  **MYTH:** Dyslexia is caused by problems with vision, such as eye tracking.
-  **FACT:** Dyslexia is not a vision problem. While eye tracking difficulties could certainly create challenges in learning to read, dyslexia is not caused by vision difficulties.¹ Dyslexia is neurobiological, which means that readers with dyslexia activate different regions of the brain and use different pathways when reading as compared to typical readers.¹⁰ Research does not support the need for special fonts¹¹ or colored overlays to improve reading rate or comprehension.⁷
-  **MYTH:** Dyslexia is caused by parents not reading to their children enough.
-  **FACT:** A lack of being read to does not cause dyslexia, and improving home literacy will not resolve reading challenges for people with dyslexia.¹⁸ However, opportunities to read and listen to literature are beneficial to reading achievement, particularly in developing language comprehension.

What are the characteristics of dyslexia?

-  **MYTH:** A sign of dyslexia is writing letters backward or upside down.
-  **FACT:** Beginning readers often confuse letters with a similar shape, such as b/d, p/q, m/w, n/u.^{3,8} These reversals typically peak in children between the ages of seven and ten as children learn to recognize letters.⁴ If students continue to have problems correctly identifying or writing letters by third grade, further assessments may be warranted to determine if these difficulties could result from unidentified and unaddressed dyslexia.⁷
-  **MYTH:** Dyslexia shows that someone has a low or high intelligence.
-  **FACT:** Dyslexia has no correlation with high or low intelligence.¹⁵ Dyslexia occurs on a wide intelligence spectrum.⁵
-  **MYTH:** Students with dyslexia are lazy and just need to work harder.
-  **FACT:** Researchers have found that students with dyslexia are working very hard; they use nearly five times the brain area as typical readers when performing the same language task.¹⁴
-  **MYTH:** People with dyslexia share common strengths, such as an ability to “think outside the box.”
-  **FACT:** People with dyslexia have their own unique set of strengths, which may or may not include “outside the box” thinking. An expectation that people with dyslexia have particular gifts and talents may lead to frustration and disappointment when that expectation is not met.⁶

Content written in partnership with Anna Geiger.





How is dyslexia identified and treated?

✗ MYTH: Dyslexia is rare or nonexistent.

✓ FACT: Determining the exact prevalence of dyslexia is difficult for many reasons. However, Dr. Nadine Gaab¹³ estimates that in a class of 20 children, 1-2 students are likely to have dyslexia.

✗ MYTH: Dyslexia cannot be identified until third grade, and intervention should only begin after students struggle to read over a prolonged period of time.

✓ FACT: Signs of dyslexia can be observed as early as preschool.¹² Identifying risks for reading failure early leads to early intervention. Waiting too long to intervene can be disastrous as children's brains lose the ability to change and adapt in response to instruction as they become older. If students with dyslexia do not receive intervention until third grade, they may begin to experience anger, stress, shame, and other symptoms of emotional distress.⁸

✗ MYTH: Children will outgrow dyslexia.

✓ FACT: Dyslexia is a lifelong condition. If students get off to a poor start in reading and do not receive proper intervention, they rarely catch up.¹⁶ Early identification and appropriate instruction can help students with dyslexia overcome their reading challenges. Accommodations in instruction and assessment can make content more accessible to students with dyslexia because they provide access to the full school experience for students with reading difficulties and make it possible for students with reading difficulties to demonstrate their learning without being hindered by their differences.² Dr. Jan Hasbrouck writes that "we cannot cure dyslexia, but when we provide students with effective literacy learning environments and powerful instruction beginning in PreK, we can greatly influence their ability to read and write on grade level."⁸

✗ MYTH: Only certified professionals are skilled enough to provide effective interventions for students with dyslexia.

✓ FACT: Educators with strong knowledge of evidence-based practices are capable of meeting the needs of students with dyslexia. In fact, classroom teachers are an incredibly important and valuable resource, providing critical support to students with dyslexia. Teachers that are skilled in the science and practice of reading instruction can have an enormous impact on the education and life trajectories of students with dyslexia.¹⁸

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