

## Questions Parents Frequently Ask About Reading

1. **My child reverses letters. Is this normal?** Most children reverse letters to some degree until the end of first grade. Our brains are wired to see images and objects, such as a chair, from any angle and still recognize it. Because of this, children often confuse letters that have similar shapes in different orientations, such as b/d/p and u/n. Very early on, in pre-K and K, they will also reverse letters individually. By the end of first grade, children should be reading and forming letters correctly over 95% of the time, and correcting any errors independently.
  
2. **Is Dyslexia hereditary?** Research has shown that children with a family history of speech, language, and reading disorders are at significantly higher risk for developing speech, language, and reading disorders. If you have a family history of these difficulties, and you have concerns about your child, you may consider getting them evaluated earlier.
  
3. **What are some warning signs that my child may have a reading disability?** We look at many factors to determine whether a child is developing written language skills appropriately. The following is a basic guideline to help you know what to expect in your child’s development:

| Grade Level | My child should be:  | I should be concerned if my child:   |
|-------------|--|--|
| Pre-K       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• learning the letters and the sounds they make</li> <li>• enjoy books and being read to</li> <li>• learning to spell their own name in uppercase letters</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has difficulty learning shapes, colors, and other early vocabulary</li> <li>• has difficulty recognizing their own name in print</li> <li>• has difficulty sequencing stories</li> <li>• has a history of speech or language difficulties</li> </ul>  |
| K           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• confident in the basic letters and their sounds.</li> <li>• learning to put sounds together to make 3 and 4 sound words such as “cat” and “fast”</li> <li>• learning early sight words</li> <li>• still reversing some letters, especially letters that are similar in shape such as b/d</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has difficulty reading and spelling simple phonetic 3 and 4 sound words such as “cat” and “fast”</li> <li>• has laborious, time-consuming handwriting</li> <li>• makes frequent left-right errors</li> <li>• shows word retrieval or vocabulary deficits</li> <li>• avoids reading tasks or is uninterested in books</li> </ul> |

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have mastered the letters and their sounds</li> <li>• rarely making letter reversals, and correcting them when they do</li> <li>• learning vowel teams such as “ee” in “feet”</li> <li>• reading and spelling single syllable words fairly accurately</li> </ul>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• frequently misreads early sight words such as “the” and “was”</li> <li>• has difficulty reading or spelling phonetic nonsense words</li> <li>• has difficulty with math – following directions, answering word problems, memorizing math facts, or reversing/transposing numbers</li> <li>• leaves sounds out of words, or puts sounds in that aren’t there</li> <li>• after getting help on a word, fails to recognize the same word in the next sentence</li> </ul> |
| 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have mastered the letters and their sounds, including vowel teams.</li> <li>• effortlessly read and spell phonetic words up to 5 sounds</li> <li>• reading and spelling simple multi-syllabic words accurately</li> <li>• reading more fluently and expressively in oral reading</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reads what they “meant” to write, not what they actually wrote</li> <li>• complains of physical ailments during reading/spelling tests – sign of stress/anxiety</li> <li>• has difficulty copying words accurately</li> <li>• spells the same word inconsistently</li> <li>• frequently guesses words with similar endings, such as hunger/hungry</li> </ul>  |
| 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reading and spelling multisyllable words accurately</li> <li>• writing detailed stories</li> <li>• beginning to use compound and complex sentences in writing</li> <li>• academics shift to comprehension and writing, and emphasize phonics less</li> </ul>                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• takes a long time to complete reading/writing tasks</li> <li>• difficulty organizing and sequencing ideas</li> <li>• struggles with spelling – frequently simplifies vocabulary to avoid spelling difficult words</li> <li>• has difficulty reading words with special endings</li> <li>• has difficulty with reading comprehension</li> </ul>  |

Data from Overcoming Dyslexia, Sally Shaywitz

**4. Does reading therapy help?** Yes, if you find a therapist who uses a phonics-based approach. Orton-Gillingham is the leading research-based phonics instruction method, and many programs, such as Wilson, follow this type of approach. Many reading specialists in the school system also use a phonics based approach.

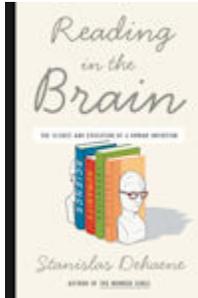
**5. Where can I get my child tested?** There are several avenues that you can pursue. The public school system is required to do testing within 90 days if you submit a formal request. You can also pursue private educational testing (which can include IQ testing as well as a full battery of academic testing) with an educational psychologist working in

private practice. A speech-language pathologist specializing in literacy is also qualified to evaluate written language, including reading and spelling.

## **6. What are some activities I can do at home to help my child learn to read and spell?**

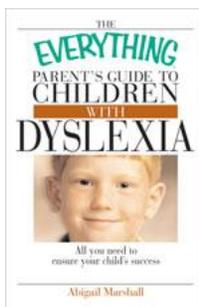
- Focus on letter sounds, not letter names. Use the letter's most common sound (c says "kuh" like in "cat" for example) to ensure that is the default sound your child knows. Pay special attention to the short vowels. a = apple, e = elephant, i = igloo, u = up, and o = octopus. In our region of the country, children have the most difficulty hearing the difference between i and e.
- If your child is sounding out a word, have them say each sound as they write the letter. This helps to reinforce the letter/sound correspondence that is so important for them to learn.
- Play sound games, such as "I spy," using sounds instead of visual clues. For example, Adult: "I spy a t-ay-bu-l" (sounding out the word table into its 4 sounds)  
Child: "Table!"
- If your child asks you how to spell a word, don't send them to the dictionary! If it's a weird word (we call them "red words!"), tell the child, "That's a hard one... I'll tell you the letters... e-i-g-h-t." If it's a phonetic word, you can say, "You can do that one! Let me help you sound it out... f-a-s-t" Tell them each sound, and wait while they form the right letter to match the sound. As they improve their skills, see if they can sound out the words themselves
- Target letter reversals by working on how it "feels" to write the letter, rather than how it looks. Use invisible ink pens, write with eyes closed, write with your finger tip (of your writing hand) in sand, etc. A multi-sensory approach gives the child more information about the formation of each letter.
- Read, Read, Read. Early reader books such as the "Beginning Reader" Dr. Seuss books are great for learning early sight words. Go, Dog, Go is a favorite! But reading any book your child is interested in will help foster a comfort with books and words, as well as improve comprehension and vocabulary skills.
- Model enjoyable reading time. Our kids today are so focused on video games and toys that they don't take the time to learn to enjoy reading. If reading is something you love, let your child see you spending some relaxation time reading. Share your book with them, and tell them why you are enjoying it. Bring out some books from your own childhood that you loved. Kids want to be like their parents, so model the kind of reader you want them to be!

# Recommended Reading



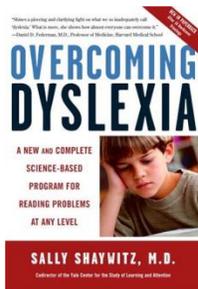
Reading in the Brain: The Science and Evolution of a Human Invention

Stanislas Dehaene



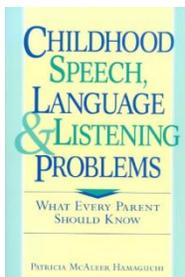
The Everything Parent's Guide to Children with Dyslexia

Abigail Marshall



Overcoming Dyslexia: A New and Complete Science-Based Program for Reading Problems at Any Level

Sally Shaywitz



Childhood Speech, Language, and Listening Problems: What Every Parent Should Know

Patricia McAleer Hamaguchi