

# DYSLEXIA

Resource Guide for Families



# What is Dyslexia?

A definition of dyslexia is included in Arizona statute so parents and educators can better understand the needs of children with dyslexia. Since dyslexia persists over time and interferes with learning, it is critical that children receive help from parents and teachers as early as possible. While early intervention is the best way to help your child get on track with their reading and writing, it is never too late to help older children make progress and succeed.

According to the Arizona Revised Statutes A.R.S. 15-701 “**Dyslexia**” means a specific learning disorder that is neurological in origin. It is characterized by a child’s difficulty with accurately identifying words or demonstrating poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a child’s struggle with breaking words into parts for understanding and pronunciation. This is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Additional consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.

## What Might Dyslexia Look Like in Your Child?

As a parent, one of the earliest warning signs you may notice is how your child’s spoken language develops. However, for other children, they may develop this skill along with classmates at the same rate. As a result, it is often important to pay attention to other potential signs that a child may be struggling with dyslexia. In fact, a child with dyslexia usually exhibits several behaviors that persist over time and interfere with learning. Below is a list of these potential warning signs. A child may demonstrate any mix of these and while that does not automatically mean he or she has dyslexia, **it is important to address any concerns with your child’s school as soon as they arise.**

### Preschool

- Delay in learning to talk
- Difficulty pronouncing words (e.g., “pusgetti” for “spaghetti”)
- Persistent “baby talk”
- Difficulty remembering nursery rhymes and chants
- Difficulty learning and naming letters and numbers
- Remembering the letters in his/her name
- Often telling stories that are hard to follow; having trouble talking about an event in a logical order

### K-2nd Grade

- Doesn’t associate letter or letter combinations with sounds
- Difficulty in sounding out even simple words like cat, map, nap
- A history of reading problems in parents or siblings
- Reads slowly, reads words incorrectly or reads without expression
- Confusion with pairs such as before/after, right/left, etc.

### 3rd-5th Grade

- Difficulty reading unfamiliar words, often making wild guesses because they cannot sound out the word
- Demonstrating an easier time answering questions about text if the text is read aloud
- Difficulty pronouncing words correctly (e.g., “mazine” instead of “magazine”)
- Difficulty writing; frequent spelling mistakes
- Skipping or misreading common short words

### 6th-12th Grade

- Reads slowly and becomes frustrated; doesn’t like to read
- Often skips over small words or leaves out part of longer words when reading aloud
- Prefers multiple choice questions over fill-in-the-blank or other questions with short answers
- Difficulty learning a foreign language
- Weak memory for facts, lists or directions

## What Can I Do to Help My Child With Dyslexia?



- Read to your child every day
- Encourage development of listening skills
- Sing rhyming songs and match pictures of objects that rhyme (phonological awareness)
- Play with sounds in words with your child
- Focus on the sounds within words (phonemes)
- Practice reading sight words
- Work on spelling
- Help with time and planning and keeping your child organized
- Ask what extra help and programs your child’s school offers
- Practice reading fluently. Fluent reading sounds as natural as speaking.

Once it is determined your child has dyslexia, there are a number of things you can do as a parent to support her and help her continue to grow and improve her reading skills.

For more suggested activities related to dyslexia see Section 2, pgs. 9-14, of the *Arizona Dyslexia Guidance Document*.

## Frequently Asked Questions About Dyslexia:

**1 Does dyslexia only occur in people who speak English?**

No. Dyslexia occurs in people from all cultures and backgrounds.

**2 My child is in preschool, is it possible for him to have dyslexia?**

Under Arizona's definition of dyslexia, a child with dyslexia has difficulty with reading and spelling. While most preschool children are not reading and spelling, difficulties with phonological awareness and language development may be warning signs for characteristics of dyslexia.

**3 Does failing a reading screening mean my child has dyslexia?**

No. There are many factors involved in poor student performance on a reading screening.

**4 What if I have a diagnosis of dyslexia from a professional outside of a school setting? What does the school do with this information when I reach out for in-school support?**

If you as a parent request an evaluation from the school because you suspect your child of having a specific learning disability in reading, a professional diagnosis from outside of the school setting becomes part of the review of existing data.

**5 Does a student who has dyslexia automatically require special education services?**

Since dyslexia presents on a spectrum from mild to severe, not all students with dyslexia will require special education services. Every school in the state screens its kindergarten through third grade students within the first month of school for struggles with reading. Students who are identified as struggling receive targeted intervention services to remediate their areas of need. For some dyslexic students, these interventions will be sufficient to help them read at grade level. Since the interventions are meeting the student's needs, he/she does not require special education services.

**6 What are the areas of a Specific Learning Disability?**

Specific Learning Disabilities are categorized in one or more of the following areas: oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skills, reading fluency skills, reading comprehension, mathematics calculation, mathematics problem solving.



## Dyslexia and Special Education: The Step-by-Step Process for Families

Every school must have a system in place to locate students in need of special education services. As a parent it is important for you to know that your input matters. Understanding this process will allow you to work in partnership with your child's school and be an advocate for your child.

**1 Screening:** Schools are also required to screen all students for disabilities within 45 days of enrollment.

**2 Referral:** Despite the best efforts of school interventions, some children with dyslexia may not attain the skills needed to make adequate progress in the general curriculum. If a disability is

suspected as the underlying reason for this, a child is referred for a full and individual evaluation.

**3 Review of Existing Data:** An initial review of existing data regarding your child may be conducted. If the school team determines no additional data is needed, eligibility for special education services is determined. If additional data is needed, it is gathered and reviewed to determine eligibility.

**4 Evaluation and Eligibility:** To determine whether a child is eligible to receive special education and related services, schools are required to conduct a full and individual evaluation under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

**5 Individualized Education Program (IEP):** If after evaluation the child is found eligible for special education services, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) is developed with school and parent input.

In addition to contacting your child's school you can visit Child Find at <http://www.azed.gov/specialeducation/az-find/> if you suspect your child has characteristics of dyslexia or a learning disability.

For more information regarding parent input and the Evaluation Process, please refer to Arizona Technical Assistance Evaluation Process document at <http://www.azed.gov/specialeducation/az-tas-documents/>

For additional resources visit [ReadOnArizona.org/Resources/](http://ReadOnArizona.org/Resources/)  
Other helpful information:

Parents can use Arizona Technology Access Program's federally funded, free AT Demonstration and Loan Program. Parents can borrow AT devices for up to two weeks or arrange for a face-to-face consultation or demonstration of an AT item at the program's office, located in central Phoenix, contact AzTAP at (602) 728-9534, or send an email to [askAzTAP@nau.edu](mailto:askAzTAP@nau.edu).



Read On Arizona extends its sincere thanks and appreciation to The Burton Family Foundation for generously supporting printing and outreach of the *Dyslexia Resource Guide for Families*.



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