

# A Guide for Struggling Readers & Spellers in DC



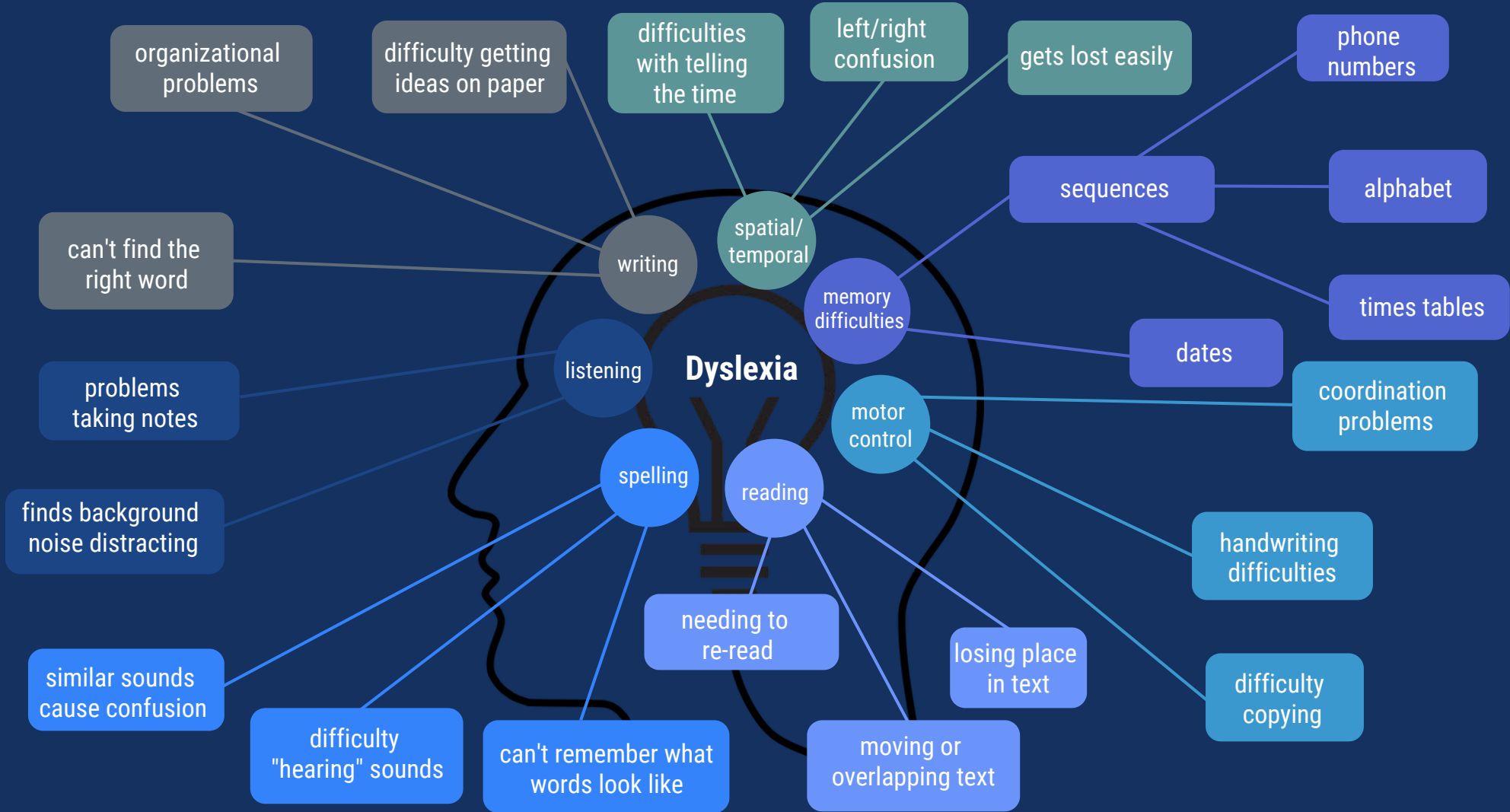
OFFICE OF THE  
STUDENT  
ADVOCATE

## DYSLEXIA GUIDEBOOK

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This toolkit is intended to help inform families and educational stakeholders of the nitty-gritty, need to know facts about Dyslexia and will provide families and stakeholders with pertinent information that can help guide them through the initial phase of navigating dyslexia and the obstacles it presents. Our hope is that this toolkit will not only raise awareness about dyslexia, but also act as a tool to empower any individual to advocate for students who may need their support.



# DYSLEXIA

**Dyslexia** is a learning disability related to reading and spelling. People with dyslexia have difficulty reading at a consistent pace without making mistakes. They may also have a hard time with reading comprehension, spelling, and writing. Since dyslexia does not fully go away, the early identification of dyslexia will help children develop the skills needed to read with more fluency and comprehend with more accuracy.

# Need to Know

Dyslexia is not a disease, it is a neurobiological condition caused by a different wiring in the brain and occurs in people of all backgrounds and intellectual levels.



Up to 15–20% of the population have some of the symptoms of dyslexia, including slow or inaccurate reading, poor spelling, poor writing, or mixing up similar words.



Most children with dyslexia can become proficient readers with early identification and comprehensive and systematic reading instruction.



Dyslexia is strongly heritable, it runs in families. Children who have a parent or sibling with dyslexia are considered at risk for dyslexia.



Structured literacy benefits ALL students in learning to read, but is critical to a percentage of students including those who are dyslexic.



Early identification and intervention of dyslexia are very important. Intervention of children at risk are most effective in kindergarten and first grade.



If you suspect a disability you may ask for a full evaluation for specialized services from your child's school at anytime.



Children with dyslexia may qualify as having a learning disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This requires public and charter schools to provide special education and related services.



# Myths

VS

# Facts

## MYTH

DC Public and Public Charter Schools cannot say dyslexia. Schools should only use the term "specific learning disability"



## FACT

According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), all schools, including DC Public and Public Charter Schools, **can** say dyslexia. Although dyslexia falls under the "specific learning disability" category, in some cases, like with dyslexia, it may be helpful to include information about the specific condition.

## MYTH

Children with dyslexia see and write letters backwards.



## FACT

Children with dyslexia do not see and write letters backwards because dyslexia is not a problem with the eyes. Many young children reverse letters when learning to write, regardless of whether or not they have dyslexia. In fact, most children with dyslexia do not reverse letters.

## MYTH

Dyslexia is more common in boys than it is in girls.



## FACT

Dyslexia affects a comparable numbers of boys and girls. However, more boys are typically referred by their teachers for evaluation, but this may be because of the more typically energetic behavior of boys in the classroom.

## MYTH

If you don't teach a child with dyslexia how to read by age 9, they will never learn how to read.



## FACT

It is never too late to help improve the reading, spelling and writing of someone with dyslexia. Although early intervention is best, adult dyslexics can still develop the skills needed to read with more fluency and comprehend with more accuracy.

# Signs and Symptoms



## Preschool Years

### Warning Signs:

- Trouble learning common nursery rhymes
- Trouble learning the names of letters in the alphabet
- Unable to recognize letters in their own name
- Persistent "baby talk"
- Doesn't recognize simple rhyming patterns (ex: cat, bat, mat)

### Strengths:

- Curiosity
- A strong imagination
- A good understanding of new concepts



## Kindergarten -- First Grade

### Warning signs:

- Expresses that reading is hard
- Cannot sound out simple words (ex: map, log, hot)
- Does not associate letters with sounds
- Reading errors that show no connection to the sound on the page

### Strengths:

- Curiosity
- A strong imagination
- A large vocabulary for their age
- Enjoys solving puzzles and building models
- Excellent listening comprehension



## Second Grade -- High School

### Warning Signs:

- Reading is slow and awkward
- Has trouble reading unfamiliar words
- Avoids reading aloud
- Uses vague language when speaking such as "stuff" or "things"
- Speech is full of hesitations and frequently uses "ums"
- Seems to need extra time to respond to questions
- Confuses words that sound alike (ex: lotion & ocean, volcano & tornado)
- Trouble remembering dates, names and phone numbers
- Poor spelling

### Strengths:

- Excellent thinking skills
- A high level of understanding what is read to them
- Sophisticated listening vocabulary
- Excels in areas not dependent on reading such as math, computers, visual arts, social studies and creative writing

# Terms to Know

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- **504 Plan:** a formal plan that schools develop to give kids with disabilities the support they need. They cover any condition that limits daily activities in a major way.
- **AD/HD:** one of the most common developmental problems, affecting 3–5% of the school population. It is characterized by inattention, distractibility, hyperactivity and impulsivity. It is estimated that 30% of those with dyslexia have coexisting AD/HD.
- **Assistive Technology:** any device, software, or equipment that helps people work around challenges so they can learn, communicate, and function better.
- **Comprehension:** Making sense of what is read. Comprehension depends on good word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, background knowledge, and language ability.
- **Dyscalculia:** A specific learning disability in learning and understanding mathematical concepts.
- **Dysgraphia:** Extremely poor handwriting or the inability to perform the motor movements required for handwriting. This condition is associated with neurological dysfunction.
- **Executive Functioning:** the ability to design actions towards a goal, handle information flexibly, realize the ramifications of behavior, and make reasonable inferences based upon limited information.
- **Fluency:** Reading words at an adequate rate with a high level of accuracy, appropriate expression, and understanding.
- **Gifted and Talented Learning Disabled (GTLD) or Twice-Exceptional:** Students who are identified as gifted and talented who also have met criteria for an IEP or 504 plan. These students are learners who have high performance or potential in a gift, talent, or ability area combined with one or more disabilities that may affect achievement.
- **Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE):** A private evaluation from an outside source. Usually parents pay for this type of private testing, but if you are dissatisfied with your child’s school based evaluation you can request an Independent Education Evaluation at public expense.

# Terms to Know

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- **Individualized Education Plan (IEP):** A document that sets out the child's placement in special education as well as the specific goals, short-term objectives, and benchmarks for measuring progress each year
- **Language based learning disability:** A disorder in one or more of the basic processes involved and understanding or producing spoken or written language.
- **Phonics:** The paired association between letters and sounds; an approach to the teaching of reading and spelling that emphasizes sound-symbol relationships, especially in early instruction.
- **Phonological Awareness:** The sensitivity to the sound structure in spoken language. Phonological awareness progresses from rhyming; to syllable counting; to detecting first, last, and middle sounds; to phonemic awareness, which includes segmenting, adding, deleting, and substituting sounds in words.
- **Processing Speed:** Processing speed is the pace at which you take in information, make sense of it, and begin to respond.
- **Rapid Automized Naming (RAN):** The ability to quickly name aloud a series of familiar items on a page. These include letters, numbers, colors or objects.
- **Response to Intervention (RTI):** An integrated model of assessment and intervention with a multilevel prevention system to identify students at risk as well as monitor their progress, supply evidence-based interventions, and allow for appropriate adjustments based on student responsiveness. An alternative way to identify students with learning disabilities.
- **Structured Literacy:** Explicitly teaches systematic word-identification/decoding strategies. This benefits all students, and are vital for those with dyslexia.
- **Written language disorder:** A disability that involves impairment in reading, decoding, sight word recognition, reading comprehension, spelling, and/or written expression. Written language disorders, as with spoken language disorders, can involve any of the five language domains (phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics).



# What to Ask



I want to request an evaluation because I am concerned that my child may be dyslexic or have another language-based learning disability



What types of goals are usually included on an IEP for kids with dyslexia?

Check out Virginia's Dyslexia Guide [here](#) (scroll to pg. 21).



What are my student's strengths and areas of improvement?



What type of reading intervention is being provided for my child? Is it explicit and strategic?



Is the reading intervention being consistently provided?



How will you let me know if my child is making progress?



Who else can provide information about Dyslexia and other special education services?

# Resources

for

# Parents & Educators



## Local Resources

**Capital Area Branch of  
The International Dyslexia Association**  
<https://dc.dyslexiaida.org>  
Phone: (301) 906-1630

**DC Office of Human Rights**  
[www.ohr.dc.gov](http://www.ohr.dc.gov)  
Phone: (202) 727-4559  
Email: [ohr@dc.gov](mailto:ohr@dc.gov)

**DC Public Charter School Board**  
[www.dcpcsb.org](http://www.dcpcsb.org)  
Phone: (202) 328-2660

**DC Public Schools**  
[www.dcps.dc.gov](http://www.dcps.dc.gov)  
Phone: (202) 442-5885

**Decoding Dyslexia DC**  
<https://www.decodingdyslexiadc.org>  
Phone: (240) 545-5323  
Email: [DecodingDyslexiaDC@gmail.com](mailto:DecodingDyslexiaDC@gmail.com)

**Office of The State Superintendent (OSSE)**  
<https://osse.dc.gov>  
Phone: (202) 727-6436

**Office of The Student Advocate**  
[studentadvocate.dc.gov](http://studentadvocate.dc.gov)  
Phone: (202) 741-4692  
Email: [student.advocate@dc.gov](mailto:student.advocate@dc.gov)

**Office of The Ombudsman for Public Education**  
<https://sboe.dc.gov/page/office-ombudsman-public-education>  
Phone: (202) 741-0886  
Email: [om.budsman@dc.gov](mailto:om.budsman@dc.gov)

For more information on local resources, visit <https://sboe.dc.gov/node/1153932>



## National Resources

**National Center for Learning Disabilities**  
[www.nclld.org](http://www.nclld.org)

**National Center on Improving Literacy**  
[www.improvingliteracy.org](http://www.improvingliteracy.org)  
Email: [nciliteracy@gmail.com](mailto:nciliteracy@gmail.com)

**The Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity**  
[www.dyslexia.yale.edu](http://www.dyslexia.yale.edu)

**The Office of Special Education Programs**  
[www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep/about.html](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep/about.html)  
Phone: (202) 245-7100

**Children's Dyslexia Centers, Inc.**  
[www.childrensdyslexiacenters.org](http://www.childrensdyslexiacenters.org)  
Phone: (877) 861-0528

**Learning Ally**  
[www.learningally.org](http://www.learningally.org)  
Phone: (800) 221-4792

**LD Online**  
[www.ldonline.org](http://www.ldonline.org)

**Bookshare**  
<https://www.bookshare.org/cms/>

**Understood**  
[www.understood.org](http://www.understood.org)

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Act**  
<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/>

*The following resources may have a cost associated with their services:*

**The Reading League**  
Phone: (315) 362-2620  
Email: [info@thereadingleague.org](mailto:info@thereadingleague.org)

# Sources

## **Dyslexia Help**

Debunking the Myths about Dyslexia. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://dyslexiahelp.umich.edu/dyslexics/learn-about-dyslexia/what-is-dyslexia/debunking-common-myths-about-dyslexia>

## **Decoding Dyslexia DC**

Decoding Dyslexia - Washington DC. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.decodingdyslexiadc.org/>

## **Gaab Lab**

Dyslexia Myths. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.gaablalab.com/dyslexia-myths>

## **United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services**

Home. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/>

## **International Dyslexia Association**

International Dyslexia Association. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.dyslexiaida.org/>

## **Improving Literacy**

National Center on Improving Literacy. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://improvingliteracy.org/>

## **Virginia Department of Education**

Specific Learning Disability Supplementary Guide Dyslexia: Frequently Asked Questions. (2017). Retrieved from [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special\\_ed/disabilities/learning\\_disability/sld-dyslexia-guide.pdf](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/disabilities/learning_disability/sld-dyslexia-guide.pdf)

## **The Yale Center for Dyslexia & Creativity**

The Yale Center for Dyslexia & Creativity - Yale School of Medicine. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://dyslexia.yale.edu/>

## **Montgomery County Public Schools**

Twice Exceptional Students A STAFF GUIDEBOOK. (2015). Retrieved from [https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/curriculum/enriched/programs/gtld/0470.15\\_TwiceExceptionalStudents\\_Handbook\\_Web.pdf](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/curriculum/enriched/programs/gtld/0470.15_TwiceExceptionalStudents_Handbook_Web.pdf)

## **Understood.org**

Understood: For Learning and Thinking Differences. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.understood.org/>

# Need Immediate Assistance?



Our Request for Assistance (RFA) Line operates Monday through Friday from 9 am-5 pm. Our staff members answer live and are prepared to answer any questions or concerns you may have regarding your student or public education in the District.

**RFA Line: 202.741.4692**

## Office of the Student Advocate

The Office of the Student Advocate was established by the Council of the District of Columbia through the Parent and Student Empowerment Act of 2013 .

The office provides guidance and resource supports for families in order to assist them in navigating our complex system of public education in DC.

For more information, visit our [website](#).



The Office of the Student Advocate is an independent office housed within the DC State Board of Education.

[student.advocate@dc.gov](mailto:student.advocate@dc.gov)

(202) 741-4692

@DC\_Advocate