

Dear Iowans,

October is Dyslexia Awareness Month! As part of our mission to raise dyslexia awareness, Decoding Dyslexia Iowa is pleased to share this packet of informational resources about dyslexia. They include:

- Signs and symptoms of dyslexia, from preschool through adult
- Myths and facts about dyslexia
- Tips for teachers to create a dyslexia-friendly classroom
- Successful people who have dyslexia
- Books about dyslexia and featuring characters with dyslexia and learning disabilities

Ideas for using these resources:

- Print the handouts and place them in common areas and on community bulletin boards.
- Email the packet to teachers and administrators in your school district and ask them to share it with staff and families. Handouts can be sent home with students, dyslexia facts can be shared in school announcements, etc.
- Ask your company to distribute the handouts via email, intranet announcements, etc.
- Contact your library and ask them to display dyslexia books and handouts in October.
- Share one piece of information about dyslexia each day on your social media, such as a myth, fact or famous person.

Thank you for your help in raising dyslexia awareness! We'd love to hear about your efforts. If you'd like to share with us, send us an email at [info@decodingdyslexiaiowa.org](mailto:info@decodingdyslexiaiowa.org). Remember, while October is officially Dyslexia Awareness Month, anytime is the right time to share information and resources.

Sincerely,

The Decoding Dyslexia Iowa team  
[decodingdyslexiaiowa.org](http://decodingdyslexiaiowa.org)



# Signs of Dyslexia

If a child has three or more of the following signs, encourage that child's parents and teachers to learn more about dyslexia.

## In Preschool

- Delayed speech
- Mixing up the sounds and syllables in long words
- Chronic ear infections
- Severe reactions to childhood illnesses
- Constant confusion of left versus right
- Late establishing a dominant hand
- Difficulty learning to tie shoes
- Trouble memorizing their address, phone number, or the alphabet
- Can't create words that rhyme
- A close relative with dyslexia

## In Elementary School

- Dysgraphia (slow, non-automatic handwriting that is difficult to read)
- Letter or number reversals continuing past the end of first grade
- Extreme difficulty learning cursive
- Slow, choppy, inaccurate reading:
  - guesses based on shape or context
  - skips or misreads prepositions (at, to, of)
  - ignores suffixes
  - can't sound out unknown words
- Terrible spelling
- Often can't remember sight words (they, an, the) or homonyms (their, they're, and there)
- Difficulty telling time with a clock with hands
- Trouble with math
  - memorizing multiplication tables
  - memorizing a sequence of steps
  - directionality
- When speaking, difficulty finding the right word
  - lots of "whatyamacallits" and "thingies"
  - common sayings come out slightly twisted
- Extremely messy bedroom, backpack, and desk
- Dreads going to school
  - complains of stomach aches or headaches
  - may have nightmares about school

## In High School

All of the above symptoms plus:

- Limited vocabulary
- Extremely poor written expression
  - large discrepancy between verbal skills and written compositions
- Unable to master a foreign language
- Difficulty reading printed music
- Poor grades in many classes
- May drop out of high school

## In Adults

Education history similar to above, plus:

- Slow reader
- May have to read a page 2 or 3 times to understand it
- Terrible speller
- Difficulty putting thoughts onto paper
- Dreads writing memos or letters
- Still has difficulty with right versus left
- Often gets lost, even in a familiar city
- Sometimes confuses b and d, especially when tired or sick

Source: Bright Solutions for Dyslexia  
Email: [info@BrightSolutions.US](mailto:info@BrightSolutions.US)  
[www.BrightSolutions.US](http://www.BrightSolutions.US)  
© 2002 by Susan Barton. All Rights Reserved.

For local help and information, contact:

Decoding Dyslexia Iowa  
Facebook: [facebook.com/DecodingDyslexiaIowa](https://www.facebook.com/DecodingDyslexiaIowa)  
Web site: [decodingdyslexiaiowa.org](http://decodingdyslexiaiowa.org)



## Dyslexia – Know the Facts!

**MYTH:** *People with dyslexia see things backwards.*

- **FACT:** People with dyslexia see things just like everyone else. They do not see ‘was’ as ‘saw’ for example. They do have trouble with directionality – for example they may confuse left and right. They often have difficulty finding the right names for things. Although people with dyslexia may write letters and numbers backwards, not all do, and this is considered normal through the end of first grade. Dyslexics actually have trouble processing and manipulating the sounds of language.

**MYTH:** *Dyslexia is rare.*

- **FACT:** Dyslexia affects 5-20% of people, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. The AAP further states that dyslexia is the most common learning disability, accounting for 80% of all learning disabilities.

**MYTH:** *Kids with dyslexia will outgrow it.*

- **FACT:** Kids do not outgrow dyslexia. Dyslexia can be remediated by the right kind of instruction, but symptoms do not go away just because a child grows up. Kids with dyslexia grow up to be adults with dyslexia.

**MYTH:** *Dyslexia could be prevented if parents read to their kids more.*

- **FACT:** Dyslexia is caused by an inherited brain difference, not by something a parent fails to do. According to the AAP, if a parent has dyslexia, there is a 40-50% chance their parent, sibling, or child also has it. No amount of reading aloud will teach a person with dyslexia how to read. People with dyslexia need specific instructional approaches that systematically and sequentially teach the sounds and symbols of our language.

## How to Have a Dyslexia-Friendly Classroom!

- *Learn what it means* to have dyslexia. Visit the web sites of Decoding Dyslexia Iowa and the International Dyslexia Association for information.
- Familiarize yourself with *classroom accommodations* for students with dyslexia. Understand that accommodations are not cheating – they allow equal access to the curriculum.
- *Facilitate and encourage* the use of accommodations – do not make a dyslexic student ask for them in front of others. They are often embarrassed to do so.
- Understand that most students with dyslexia will have trouble copying from the board. If the board is used, *provide a transcript* for them.
- Allow dyslexic students to show what they know despite their difficulties with reading and writing. Let them answer questions verbally and consider *alternative assignments*, such as oral reports.
- Don't ask students with dyslexia to do things that publicly expose their weaknesses. For example, don't ask them to read aloud unless they are *comfortable* and agreed to do so ahead of time, *in private*.
- Watch for signs of *fatigue*. Students with dyslexia have to work much harder than other students, which is exhausting. Their work will often deteriorate over time, especially at the end of the day.
- Don't overload dyslexic students with oral instructions. *Go a little slower and allow time* for your words to sink in. Remember that many dyslexic students have weak auditory processing.
- Make worksheets *dyslexia-friendly*. Avoid visual crowding of text and multiple choice questions with confusing wording. Familiarize yourself with *technology* that allows students with dyslexia to have worksheets read to them and to type their answers.
- *Don't scold* students with dyslexia when they lose or forget things, miss the meaning of something or have a bad day. Remember that you would not scold a deaf child for not hearing something.
- Don't expect the same *quantity of written work* as you do from other students.
- Offer *audio books* in your classroom for required reading and during free reading time. Audio books have been shown to improve literacy outcomes for all students, but they are especially important for students with dyslexia who tend to have high comprehension but low decoding abilities.

## Successful People with Dyslexia

### **Maggie Aderin-Pocock**

Astronomer and space scientist and co-producer of the long running TV program 'The Sky at Night', Aderin-Pocock is a research fellow in UCL Department of Science and Technology Studies. She is also an Honorary Research Associate in UCL Department of Physics and Astronomy.

### **Princess Beatrice of York**

Princess Beatrice was diagnosed with dyslexia at age seven. She credits her parents with helping her work through her struggles with reading and writing. She often speaks to children with dyslexia and tells them, "You have magical brains, they just process differently."

### **Professor Elizabeth Blackburn**

Blackburn discovered the molecular nature of telomeres – the ends of eukaryotic chromosomes that serve as protective caps essential for preserving the genetic information – and co-discovered the ribonucleoprotein enzyme, telomerase, earning her the Nobel Prize in Medicine.

### **Orlando Bloom**

Bloom is an accomplished actor known for his starring roles in 'Pirates of the Caribbean' and 'Lord of the Rings.' When he was diagnosed with dyslexia, his mother encouraged him to take art and drama classes.

### **Richard Branson**

Branson struggled in school and dropped out at age 16 - a decision that ultimately led to the creation of Virgin Records. His entrepreneurial projects started in the music industry and expanded into other sectors, and he is now estimated to be worth over \$3 billion.

### **Erin Brockovich**

Environmental activist Brockovich won a \$333 million class-action lawsuit against a corporation who polluted a community's water supply — the largest of its kind in U.S. history. She had great difficulty reading in school and reports a lot of teasing from other kids. She was diagnosed with dyslexia as an adult.

### **Cher**

Cher was unable to read and dropped out two weeks into high school. She was diagnosed with dyslexia at age 30 when looking for answers for her own child. Because of her dyslexia, she became an avid listener and was able to notice information most others missed.

### **Anderson Cooper**

The longtime cable news host was diagnosed with dyslexia as a child. Cooper has expressed gratitude to his teachers and his parents for the role they played in his success.

### **Tom Cruise**

Most know Cruise as a blockbuster film actor, but fewer know he was diagnosed with dyslexia at age seven. "I'd try to concentrate on what I was reading, then I'd get to the end of the page and have very little memory of anything I'd read." He eventually adopted unique techniques to learn his lines.

### **Leonardo Da Vinci**

Da Vinci was primarily a painter and is best known for the ‘Mona Lisa,’ however he was also skilled in many other areas - including mathematics, sculpting and inventing.

### **Walt Disney**

An American icon who built the Disney Empire with his brother, Disney is responsible for the growth of animation production. The popular Disney parks have since been developed globally.

### **Whoopi Goldberg**

Comedian, actress and political activist, Goldberg is one of a handful of people to win an Oscar, a Grammy, a Tony and an Emmy.

### **Salma Hayak**

A Mexican American actress, Hayak was diagnosed with dyslexia in childhood and has spoken about the difficulties of arriving in the United States and learning English. Hayak states that she may take longer to read scripts than her co-stars, but she only needs to read them once to get them.

### **Jamie Oliver**

Professional chef, bookseller and TV personality, Oliver initially left school at age 16. He worked his way up the kitchen ladder and rose quickly to head chef.

### **Pablo Picasso**

One of the most renowned artists of all time, Picasso is known for his ability to paint unusual abstract art. Many believe it was his dyslexia that inspired his extraordinary painting ideas.

### **Nolan Ryan**

Ryan is famous for his long pitching career with the Texas Rangers. Like many, he was diagnosed with dyslexia as an adult and remembers feeling stupid in school. He went on to pitch for 27 seasons as a professional baseball player.

### **Steven Spielberg**

One of the most influential film personalities in the history of film, he is perhaps Hollywood's best-known director and one of the wealthiest filmmakers in the world. Winner of all kinds of awards, his movies showcase his innovation and creativity.

### **Octavia Spencer**

Spencer, an actress and children's author, isn't shy about talking about her dyslexia. "I was a dyslexic child and am a dyslexic adult," she has said. "That doesn't really mean that you're not intelligent—it just means that your brain functions differently."

### **Henry Winkler**

Winkler starred in 'Happy Days' and is the author of the 'Hank Zipzer' book series, whose title character has dyslexia and is based on his own childhood. Winkler speaks openly about his school struggles, and his books have helped kids know they are not alone.

## **Non-Fiction Books about Dyslexia**

[Click for links to these books on Amazon](#)

- “Dyslexia Advocate!” by Kelli Sandman-Hurley
- “The Dyslexic Advantage” by Drs. Brock and Fernette Eide
- “The Dyslexia Empowerment Plan” by Ben Foss
- “Dyslexia Screening: Essential Concepts for Schools and Parents” by Richard Selznick
- “Essentials of Dyslexia Assessment and Intervention” by Nancy Mather
- “Parenting a Struggling Reader” by Susan Hall and Louisa Moats
- “Overcoming Dyslexia” by Sally Shaywitz

## **Fiction Books Featuring Characters with Dyslexia and/or Learning Disabilities**

[Click for links to these books on Amazon](#)

- “Hank Zipzer” series by Henry Winkler
- “Here’s Hank” series by Henry Winkler
- “Dr. Dyslexia Dude” by Sean Anthony Robinson
- “Fish in a Tree” by Lynda Hall
- “Lexy” by Kristi Davis
- “Percy Jackson” series by Rick Riordan

Notes for Libraries: In addition to these books, we recommend:

- Including audio books in any dyslexia display, as many people with dyslexia prefer this method of reading.
- Providing information on how to access digital books and audio books via the library.
- Including any decodable children’s readers in the library’s catalog – [this article](#) explains what decodable texts are, why they are important, and where to find them.