# Is my child dyslexic? Signs and symptoms

**by Liz Dunoon**

**Dyslexic indicators for pre-schoolers**

* Has difficulty learning and remembering nursery rhymes.
* Likes listening to stories, but never comments on the words or letters.
* Loves listening to stories and can memorise the text of favourite stories without any association to the words.
* May have difficulty making connections between letters and sounds.
* Cannot recognise the letters in their own name.
* Never comments on word or letters in their environment, such as on TV, computers or in advertising.
* Has no interest in trying to write letters or words.
* Has difficulty drawing or copying basic geometric shapes.
* Is constantly clumsy, lacking coordination and general body awareness.
* Finds it difficult to use scissors, crayons, paintbrushes etc.
* Has trouble counting or learning to identify written numbers.
* Has a history of slow speech development and has trouble being understood by strangers.
* Finds it hard to follow more than one instruction at a time.
* Has trouble locating familiar objects in the home and has difficulty putting items away where they belong.
* Forgets the names of people, places, teachers, colours, and shapes etc.
* Has trouble with gross motor skills such as catching, kicking, throwing, hopping, galloping, skipping etc.
* Has an immediate family member who also displays difficulty with reading, writing and spelling.

Please be aware that it is very common for young children up to the age of 6-7 years to write letters, words and whole sentences backwards. That is, from right to left instead of left to right. This is known as ‘transposing’. It is perfectly normal for backwards writing and sometimes reading to occur on occasion. If you point it out to your child, they may acknowledge their mistake and giggle. It is important not to reprimand your young child for making this mistake. All attempts at writing need to be celebrated and this is a normal part of writing and reading development. It is not considered an indicator of dyslexia, unless it occurs very regularly or into their later elementary school years.

**Dyslexic indicators for elementary** **or primary school students**

[They show traits similar to those of the younger students with a few differences summarized here]:

* Doesn’t enjoy going to school and comes home from school most days exhausted, disagreeable and stressed
* Appears to be trying really hard at school, but is not making good progress.
* Has trouble learning and reading basic frequently used sight words such as; my, the, in, on, can, we, to, at, be, etc., often given on flashcard to new school starters.
* When writing or copying written words, has trouble seeing the spaces between the words - they all seem to run together.
* Continues to rely heavily on pictures and illustrations in readers and books.
* Is hesitant and laboured when reading aloud.
* Guesses wildly when reading unknown words instead of trying to sound them out.
* Can learn a word, (with parent or teacher help) on a page in their reader and then cannot recognise the same word on the following pages.
* May skip parts of words when reading, for example will read ‘there’ instead

of ‘thermometer’.

* Memorises whole stories to avoid processing words and reading.
* Can be easily distracted and lack concentration in the classroom.
* May have difficulty copying words from the blackboard/whiteboard. Unable to copy long word sequences and copies slowly letter by letter or word part by word part.
* Has difficulty following a series of instructions.
* Has a fear of becoming lost.
* Has a limited vocabulary and Produces messy work, with poor handwriting and many crossings out.
* Often spells bizarrely, writing words based on the sounds of the letters and random guesses.
* Has good comprehension skills when tested verbally, but then cannot write the same answers correctly.
* Can count aloud, but cannot recognise numbers when written numerically or write them when asked.
* Has difficulty learning their multiplication or times tables.
* Has difficulty learning to tell the time on an analogue clock. They may prefer digital.
* Has difficulty remembering things in sequential order.

Will try anything to get out of doing their schoolwork.

* May seek constant reassurance by continually asking what is required of them or what is about to happen in terms of future events and schedules.
* Has an immediate family member who also displays difficulty with reading, writing and spelling.

**Dyslexic indicators for middle, secondary or senior school**

Children develop at different rates. For this age group it is also important to consider the indicators listed for primary/elementary school students, as well as the following traits [summarized].

* Chooses subjects where a minimum of reading, writing and bookwork is required.
* Prefers subjects that allow for mental, physical or hands on creativity.
* Has trouble taking notes or keeping up in class

\*\* Lacks strategies to complete set school tasks, organise themselves or to  
 meet deadlines.

* Is often in the wrong place at the wrong time for no apparent reason.
* May know how to arrive at the correct answer for a complex mathematical equation, but cannot write the steps which led to the final answer.

\*\* Causes trouble at school and displays challenging and difficult behaviour  
 on a regular basis.