

Signs That May Suggest Dyslexia in Children Aged 7 to 11

Dyslexia can present in a variety of ways and often looks different from one child to the next. While no single trait confirms a diagnosis, the following patterns of behaviour and learning may indicate that further investigation is needed:

General Characteristics

- * May confuse left and right and find it difficult to navigate or follow directions
- * Struggles to follow multi-step instructions or stay focused on tasks
- * Appears distracted, disengaged, or lost in thought—may seem not to be listening
- * Sometimes described as lazy or disruptive, or becomes the “class joker”
- * Frequently tries to avoid work by sharpening pencils, wandering around the classroom, asking to leave the room, or finding distractions
- * Shows signs of fatigue either during or after school
- * Homework can be a persistent struggle, even when tasks are appropriately adapted
- * Has difficulty using dictionaries or reference materials
- * Learning profile may be uneven, with notable strengths in some areas and challenges in others
- * Organisation may be inconsistent or underdeveloped
- * Memory skills may not match overall ability
- * Performance can vary widely from day to day

Speech and Language Difficulties

- * Finds it hard to use correct verb tenses or grammar, particularly in writing
- * Hesitates or pauses when speaking, taking longer to express thoughts

- * Forgets what they were going to say after raising their hand
- * Processes spoken language more slowly than peers
- * Speaks more fluently than they write
- * Struggles to recall words or names, often using placeholders like “thingy”
- * May have had early difficulties with speech and language development
- * Vocabulary growth seems to have slowed compared to peers

Reading Challenges

- * Avoids reading aloud wherever possible
- * Reading progress may have stalled or slowed significantly
- * May read hesitantly or with little fluency and expression
- * Inconsistent recognition of familiar words—may read it once, then fail to recognise it again
- * Becomes easily tired or restless when reading
- * Finds inference, summarising, note-taking, or deeper comprehension skills difficult
- * Shows less interest in stories or books than before
- * May struggle despite strong support at home and school
- * Finds short, common words like “of,” “to,” or “which” especially tricky
- * Misses out word endings or adds/misses words when reading aloud
- * Comprehension declines when texts become more complex
- * Has difficulty summarising or identifying the main idea in a passage

Difficulties with Writing and Spelling

- * Spells unpredictably, omits letters, or mixes up their order
- * Produces messy written work, with repeated attempts at spelling a single word
- * Confuses similar-looking letters, such as b/d, p/g, or n/u

- * Written output is often minimal compared to the time given
- * Handwriting can be hard to read, and letter reversals may be common
- * Continues to spell phonetically, finding it hard to retain new spelling patterns
- * Regularly forgets the spelling of irregular high-frequency words (e.g., “what,” “where,” “of”)
- * Finds sentence construction difficult and may lose track of what they are writing mid-sentence
- * Written vocabulary doesn’t reflect spoken ability
- * Leaves off word endings or omits entire words when writing

Maths-Related Indicators

- * Finds it hard to tell the time or gauge how long tasks take
- * Struggles to recall times tables, particularly under timed conditions
- * Has difficulty with mental maths and counting backward in steps
- * Relies on fingers to carry out simple calculations
- * Confuses mathematical symbols or misreads multi-digit numbers
- * Finds it hard to remember problem-solving methods or steps
- * Is confused by the language used in maths questions
- * May guess answers rather than explain reasoning or show steps
- * Often omits working out or skips vital parts of calculations