

Dyslexia Assessment

Why do I need an assessment?

When there is a problem, it helps to understand that problem and have a label and explanation for it, because then – and only then – are we able to know where to go and what to do for help. We are offering a sample dyslexia assessment created by a dyslexia tester and tutor to help you identify if this is what you or your child may be dealing with.

What do I need to do?

First, you need to observe your children or become aware of your own reading habits. If you are looking at your children, you need to watch how they deal with language: Were they slow to connect letter names and sounds? Do they have difficulty with rhyme? These are all indicators. The first part of the assessment deals with questions such as these and looks at your family history, which is another strong indicator of the possibility of dyslexia.

What do I look for?

Dyslexia symptoms while reading are not random; there is a consistent pattern.

Here is a list of patterns to look for:

- Difficulty reading single words
- Particular difficulty decoding nonsense or unfamiliar words
- Reading comprehension is often superior to decoding individual words
- Inaccurate and labored oral reading of passages
- Trouble reading small “functions” words: *that, is, an, for*
- The ability to sound out or read a word on one page and then on another page, or even just a few lines, and later inability to recognize or decode the same word
- Poor memory for sequences, facts and information that has not been experienced
- Slow reading
- Poor spelling

What does the test consist of?

According to Dr. Sally Shaywitz, author of *Overcoming Dyslexia*, there are three steps that must be followed for an accurate evaluation:

1. Establish a reading problem according to age and education.
2. Gather evidence supporting its “unexpectedness”; high learning capability may be determined solely on the basis of an educational or professional level of attainment.
3. Demonstrate evidence of an isolated phonologic weakness, with other higher-level language functions relatively unaffected.

How do I accomplish these three steps?

Step 1: If you see any of the symptoms of dyslexia listed above and your child's reading level is below what it should be, even though it is apparent that he/she is a bright child, then we have established the first part of the evaluation. When he/she is having reading struggles despite intelligence or effort, that is a strong indication you are dealing with dyslexia.

Step 2: The more observations you make to this end and the more evidence you gather showing a consistent struggle with reading and writing, then you have moved through the second step of the evaluation. The first part of our assessment will give further evidence to support this.

Step 3: Take the phonologic assessment that contains the recommended components of phonemic awareness and memory, reading words in isolation for decoding and nonsense words to look for specific phonological weaknesses.

Do I really want to label my child or myself as dyslexic?

As parents, we are often hesitant to give our children certain labels. There can be a great deal of negative association with words such as *learning disability*, *Attention Deficit Disorder*, and *dyslexia*. Dyslexia is an important term to help identify kids with reading difficulties and is one from which we need not shy away. It is important for children to understand that their reading difficulties come from the way their brains are wired and not their intelligence level. **Giving a label gives an explanation and, therefore, can lead to a solution.**

This is how Dr. Orton, in his book *Reading, Writing, and Speech Problems in Children*, described the term *dyslexia* to a five-year-old: *dys* means problems, and *lexia* means words, so *dyslexia* means problems with the words you speak, the words you hear, and the words you see. Children and adults are so excited to have a word for it—one that explains what is going on.

Katherine Schantz, head of the Delaware Valley Friends School, shares, "It's just such a meaningful term, and the kids understand that their brain works differently and feel relieved." We should not be afraid of the term, the label, but embrace it, explore it, and discuss it with our children so that they can receive the correct help and begin to find success with words.

Dyslexia Assessment

Part I

Questionnaire (can be given to yourself or your child)

1. Do you read, write, or spell below grade level?
Absolutely___(3) Somewhat___(2) Rarely or Never___(1)
2. Have you ever been labeled as *lazy, dumb, careless, immature*, “not trying hard enough,” or having “a behavior problem?”
Absolutely___(3) Somewhat___(2) Rarely or Never___(1)
3. Do you feel that you can understand information better if it is read aloud to you than if you read it to yourself?
Absolutely___(3) Somewhat___(2) Rarely or Never___(1)
4. Do you test well orally but not on written exams?
Absolutely___(3) Somewhat___(2) Rarely or Never___(1)
5. Do you try to sound out words but struggle with even simple ones, often missing sight words such as *the, an, it*?
Absolutely___(3) Somewhat___(2) Rarely or Never___(1)
6. Do you quickly seem to forget how to spell words you just learned?
Absolutely___(3) Somewhat___(2) Rarely or Never___(1)
7. Do you feel dumb, have poor self-esteem, and feel emotional about school, reading, or testing?
Absolutely___(3) Somewhat___(2) Rarely or Never___(1)
8. When you read aloud, do you regularly substitute simpler words for other words (for example, “dog” for “puppy” or “house” for “home”)?
Absolutely___(3) Somewhat___(2) Rarely or Never___(1)
9. Is your handwriting sloppy, with poor letter formation, size, and spacing, and/or do you have difficulty with keeping numbers lined up when adding, subtracting, multiplying, or dividing?
Absolutely___(3) Somewhat___(2) Rarely or Never___(1)
10. Does your reading or writing show repetitions, additions, transpositions, omissions, substitutions, and reversals in letters, numbers, and/or words?
Absolutely___(3) Somewhat___(2) Rarely or Never___(1)
11. Is your spelling poor and inconsistent?
Absolutely___(3) Somewhat___(2) Rarely or Never___(1)

12. Do you have difficulty putting thoughts into words; leave sentences incomplete; mispronounce long words; or transpose phrases, words, and syllables when speaking?

Absolutely___(3) Somewhat___(2) Rarely or Never___(1)

13. Do you have a difficult time with short-term memory, especially for sequences of information that have little meaning?

Absolutely___(3) Somewhat___(2) Rarely or Never___(1)

14. Is there a family history of reading/spelling problems on either side of the family?

Yes___(3) No___(1)

Scoring: If you scored between 30-42, chances are dyslexia is present. If you scored between 20-30, there is a slight chance. If you scored below 20, then dyslexia is most likely not present.

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Part II

Phonemic Awareness Assessment:

Phonemic awareness includes not only awareness of the phonemic structure of words but also awareness of the syllabic structure of words and rhyme.

(Someone else needs to read these questions to the person taking the test so it can be auditory based.)

Syllable Deletion:

1. What is “rainbow” without “rain”?
Correct _____ (yes/no) If no, response given _____

2. What is “goldfish” without “fish”?
Correct _____ (yes/no) If no, response given _____

Phoneme Isolation:

3. What is the first sound in the word “van”?
Correct _____ (yes/no) If no, response given _____

4. What is the first sound in the word “mat”?
Correct _____ (yes/no) If no, response given _____

5. What is the final or ending sound in the word “dog”?
Correct _____ (yes/no) If no, response given _____

6. What is the final or ending sound in the word “band”?
Correct _____ (yes/no) If no, response given _____

7. What is the middle vowel sound you hear in the word “fat”?
Correct _____ (yes/no) If no, response given _____

8. What is the middle vowel sound you hear in the word “bun”?
Correct _____ (yes/no) If no, response given _____

Phoneme Identification:

9. What sound is the same in these words: *fix, fall, fun*?
Correct _____ (yes/no) If no, response given _____

10. What sound is the same in these words: *gas, gone, gift*?
Correct _____ (yes/no) If no, response given _____

11. What sound is the same in these words: *hat, kit, spot*?
Correct____(yes/no) If no, response given_____

12. What sound is the same in these words: *mop, tap, pup*?
Correct____(yes/no) If no, response given_____

Phoneme Categorization:

13. Which word doesn't belong with the others: *cat, mat, bat, ran*?
Correct____(yes/no) If no, response given_____

14. Which word doesn't belong with the others: *red, bed, ten, head*?
Correct____(yes/no) If no, response given_____

Phoneme Blending:

(Say each phoneme/sound in isolation. The forward slashes mean to pronounce the *sound* of that letter.)

15. What word is /n/ /o/ /t/?
Correct____(yes/no) If no, response given_____

16. What word is /m/ /a/ /d/?
Correct____(yes/no) If no, response given_____

17. What word is /s/ /l/ /e/ /d/?
Correct____(yes/no) If no, response given_____

Phoneme Segmentation:

18. How many sounds do you hear in "den"?
Correct____(yes/no) If no, response given_____

19. How many sounds do you hear in "rob"?
Correct____(yes/no) If no, response given_____

20. How many sounds do you hear in "grab"?
Correct____(yes/no) If no, response given_____

Phoneme Deletion:

(The forward slashes mean to pronounce the *sound* of that letter.)

21. What is "cat" without /k/?
Correct____(yes/no) if no, response given_____

22. What is "jet" without /j/?
Correct____(yes/no) If no, response given_____

23. What is “smile” without /s/?
Correct____(yes/no) If no, response given_____

24. What is “glad” without /g/?
Correct____(yes/no) If no, response given_____

25. What is “clap” without /p/?
Correct____(yes/no) If no, response given_____

Phoneme Manipulation:

(The forward slashes mean to pronounce the *sound* of that letter.)

26. What word would you have if you changed the /t/ in “hat” to /m/?
Correct____(yes/no) If no, response given_____

27. What word would you have if you changed the /m/ in “jam” to /b/?
Correct____(yes/no) If no, response given_____

28. What word would you have if you changed the /b/ in “bag” to /r/?
Correct____(yes/no) If no, response given_____

29. What word would you have if you changed the /d/ in “dot” to /p/?
Correct____(yes/no) If no, response given_____

30. What word would you have if you changed the /e/ in “net” to /o/?
Correct____(yes/no) If no, response given_____

31. What word would you have if you changed the /a/ in “slap” to /i/?
Correct____(yes/no) If no, response given_____

Dyslexia Assessment

Part II - Answers

Syllable Deletion:

1. What is “rainbow” without “rain”?
Answer: bow

2. What is “goldfish” without “fish”?
Answer: gold

Phoneme Isolation:

3. What is the first sound in the word “van”?
Answer: /v/

4. What is the first sound in the word “mat”?
Answer: /m/

5. What is the final or ending sound in the word “dog”?
Answer: /g/

6. What is the final or ending sound in the word “band”?
Answer: /d/

7. What is the middle vowel sound you hear in the word “fat”?
Answer: /a/

8. What is the middle vowel sound you hear in the word “bun”?
Answer: /u/

Phoneme Identification:

9. What sound is the same in these words: *fix, fall, fun*?
Answer: /f/

10. What sound is the same in these words: *gas, gone, gift*?
Answer: /g/

11. What sound is the same in these words: *hat, kit, spat*?
Answer: /t/

12. What sound is the same in these words: *mop, tap, pup*?
Answer: /p/

Phoneme Categorization:

13. Which word doesn't belong with the others: *cat, mat, bat, ran*?
Answer: "ran"

14. Which word doesn't belong with the others: *red, bed, ten, head*?
Answer: "ten"

Phoneme Blending:

(Say each phoneme/sound in isolation.)

15. What word is /n/ /o/ /t/?
Answer: "not"

16. What word is /m/ /a/ /d/?
Answer: "mad"

17. What word is /s/ /l/ /e/ /d/?
Answer: "sled"

Phoneme Segmentation:

18. How many sounds do you hear in "den"?
Answer: 3

19. How many sounds do you hear in "rob"?
Answer: 3

20. How many sounds do you hear in "grab"?
Answer: 4

Phoneme Deletion:

21. What is "cat" without /k/?
Answer: "at"

22. What is "jet" without /j/?
Answer: "et"

23. What is "smile" without /s/?
Answer: "mile"

24. What is "glad" without /g/?
Answer: "lad"

25. What is "clap" without /p/?
Answer: "cla"

Phoneme Manipulation:

26. What word would you have if you changed the /t/ in “hat” to /m/?
Answer: “ham”

27. What word would you have if you changed the /m/ in “jam” to /b/?
Answer: “jab”

28. What word would you have if you changed the /b/ in “bag” to /r/?
Answer: “rag”

29. What word would you have if you changed the /d/ in “dot” to /p/?
Answer: “pot”

30. What word would you have if you changed the /e/ in “net” to /o/?
Answer: “not”

31. What word would you have if you changed the /a/ in “slap” to /i/?
Answer: “slip”

Results: If the person taking the test got 26 or more correct, he/she has a strong phonemic awareness. If he/she got fewer than 25 correct we are looking at a phonemic weakness that could be a strong indicator of dyslexia.

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Part III

Nonsense Words and Real Words:

This test increases from simple concepts and word patterns to more-complex ones. This is not a basic word list according to grade level or frequency, and it is not a Most Common Word list; it is based on phonetic skills that will require the person to decode the words. 1st graders should be able to go through the short and long vowel list; 2nd graders should be able to go through Murmur Diphthongs and the Special Vowel Combinations; 3rd graders and above should be able to go through everything.

We are also looking for the discrepancy between their nonsense word score and their real word score; they will most likely score higher on the real words than on the nonsense words, particularly if they have a phonetic weakness. This is because those with processing disorders such as dyslexia compensate by memorizing words as a whole so, if the word has meaning or a visual attached to it, they are more likely to have it in their short-term memory. They can attach no meaning to the nonsense words, which is why it is such a good indicator of a phonemic problem. Because they will not be able to recognize these words, they must sound them out.

If the person taking the test misses more than six words in a row, you can stop. To get a specific reading grade level, go to www.readinghorizonsathome.com and under Free Learning Resources take the Online Assessment. You should also have the person read a grade level story since they do better in context than with words in isolation. (More information on this is at the end of the assessment.)

If the difference between the scores is greater than 5—the real-word score being higher—it is another indicator of possible dyslexia. If the nonsense-word score is unusually low, that, too, is a strong indicator: Anyone 7 and older should score at least 15 on the nonsense words test.

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Part III

Nonsense Words:

Have the person taking the test read the nonsense words, allowing about 10 seconds per word. Mark down the error patterns to help identify their specific weaknesses. You will want to have a copy for them to read and one for you to mark.

Single-Syllable Nonsense Words: Short Vowels

Word	No Try	Added or Omitted	Vowel Sound
	Mark only if they do not try the word.	Record which phonemes they add or delete from what should be there.	Record what they say if they answer incorrectly.
feg			
gop			
thob			
wiss			
jes			
shug			
cag			
miff			

dez			
blim			
strup			
misp			

Long Vowels

weag			
jaib			
yume			
cleab			
floke			

Murmur Diphthongs

clirt			
frarp			

gurt			
nerb			

Special Vowel Combinations

droy			
ploon			
troud			
spow			
shraw			
plaut			
roin			

Multi-Syllabic Nonsense Words

phantrite			
glafnode			

tription			
doilible			
wacepink			
feanlissable			
stobosaurus			

Number correct: ___/35

Real Words:

Have the person taking the test read the words, allowing about six seconds per word. Mark down the error patterns to help identify his/her specific weaknesses.

Single-Syllable Real Words: Short Vowels

Word	No Try	Added or Omitted	Vowel Sound
	Mark only if they do not try the word.	Record which phonemes they add or delete from what should be there.	Record what they say if they answer incorrectly.
peg			
top			
shop			
kiss			
jet			
shrug			
can			
stiff			
den			

clip			
strut			
mist			

Long Vowels

feet			
rain			
wheat			
toe			
coke			

Murmur Diphthongs

dirt			
harp			
burn			

herd			
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Special Vowel Combinations

toy			
spoon			
loud			
snow			
saw			
haul			
coin			

Multi-Syllabic Real Words

pigment			
transit			
candy			

retire			
decline			
famous			
table			

Number correct: ___/35

Summary:

This Dyslexia Assessment has been designed using the guidelines set forth from research centers and the National Dyslexic Association. It is not an official diagnosis but can give you an indication if the reading struggles you or your child are having could be a result of the processing disorder known as dyslexia. If you have trouble interpreting the results, you can e-mail our dyslexic expert at shantell@readinghorizons.com, and she can look over those results and give you her feedback. You should also have the person you are evaluating read a grade level text for about one minute. The story should have not been read before by the person and it should have no pictures. They will tend to do even better reading in context than single word reading. You could also compare the number of words read correctly in one minute to the national norms posted on the Dibels website, <http://dibels.uoregon.edu>. Those with processing disorders such as dyslexia will read slower since it takes them longer to process.

The nice thing about the solution for dyslexia is that regardless of what severity level of dyslexia the person may have, the appropriate “treatment” is the same. All of the research has concluded that in order to help struggling readers, they *must* receive systematic, explicit, sequential, intensive phonics for 60-100 hours of instruction in order to rewire their brains to use the more-automatic language centers of their brain. The *Discover Intensive Phonics* method meets all of these requirements and is research based and proven to work! Regardless of the reason, the response to your or your child’s reading struggles can be found here. Don’t wait another day to find reading success for you or your child!