

DOES MY CHILD HAVE DYSLEXIA?

Dyslexia is a term given to any persistent reading difficulty. We know that it has a neurological basis, and generally occurs in the absence of any intellectual impairment. Dyslexia is characterised by having difficulty breaking down a word into sounds and matching those sounds to individual letters. This difficulty to process phonological information and results in slow or inaccurate word reading.

There are several different types of dyslexia, which acknowledge the point at which the reading and writing process breaks down. A Speech Pathologist will be able to assess how your child is processing language and sounds, and how they are integrating their skills with reading and writing (including spelling). The [Speech Pathologist](#) will be able to discover your child's particular point of breakdown and guide you in the specific strategies required to support the varying types of dyslexia.

As reading demands increase, students who have difficulties reading words, will find that their reading accuracy, speed of processing and reading fluency declines. The student's efforts will be focused on the mechanics of reading and this will ultimately compromise reading comprehension.

WHEN SHOULD I BE WORRIED THAT MY CHILD IS NOT READING?

It's true that all children learn at different rates. Remember that there are three core skills for a successful reader: decoding (matching sounds to letters), phonological awareness (the ability to think about and process sounds), and oral language competence (comprehension and vocabulary). Relative strengths in one of these skills may enable a child to mask their reading problem for several years. It may not be until the third or fourth year that a child's true reading deficit is evident.

Reading problems may be revealed in mid primary and first be noticed by a change in the child's behaviour (e.g. avoidance of academic activities, greater levels of distraction, increased anxiety), and a growing awareness of poor comprehension, often despite adequate decoding skills.

WHAT IS DYSGRAPHIA?

Dysgraphia is a disorder of written expression. It can be language-based or non-language-based.

Evidence of language-based dysgraphia includes:

- Problems writing letters, difficulty with letter formation
- Constant confusion between capitals and lower-case letters
- Problems constructing sentences and writing extended narratives.

Evidence of non-language-based dysgraphia includes:

- Fine-motor and coordination difficulties
- Developmental coordination issues e.g. dyspraxia
- Challenges with spatial awareness

Other features of dysgraphia

- Problems using spacing between words
- Pressing too hard with the writing tool
- Trouble sticking to the lines
- The child often complains that writing is painful

If you have concerns that your child may have a form of language-based dysgraphia, [assessment](#) by a Speech Pathologist is strongly recommended.

For concerns about a non-language-based dysgraphia, assessment by an Occupational Therapist is important.

DOES MY CHILD HAVE VISUAL PROBLEMS?

If you are concerned that your child may have dyslexia or dysgraphia, it is a good idea to have their vision tested. concerns over should always have your child's vision tested. For further information and evaluation of therapies such as Behavioural Optometry and Irlen lenses, along with a range of commercially available programmes, please refer to the [independent literature reviews](#) conducted by the Macquarie University Special Education Centre.