



Learning Disabilities Fact Sheet

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What are language-based learning disabilities?

- According to the National Center for Learning Disabilities, learning disabilities stem from neurological differences in brain structure and function and affect the brain's ability to store, process or communicate information. Learning disabilities are not caused by visual, hearing or motor disabilities, low intelligence, mental retardation, nor are they the result of emotional disturbances or cultural, environmental or economic disadvantages.¹
- Language-based learning disabilities are problems with reading, spelling or writing. As many as 15 to 20 percent of the population has a language-based learning disability; of that group 70 to 80 percent have deficits in reading². Dyslexia is the most prevalent learning disability.³

What is dyslexia?

- Dyslexia is a language-based learning disability that refers to a cluster of symptoms, cause people to have difficulties with specific language skills, particularly reading. Most people with dyslexia have problems identifying the separate speech sounds within a word as well as learning how letters represent those sounds, which is a key factor in their reading difficulties.⁴
- It is a myth that people with dyslexia “read backwards” although a person's spelling can look jumbled because of difficulty remembering letter symbols for sounds and forming memories for words.⁵

¹ “The State of Learning Disabilities 2009,” National Center for Learning Disabilities. Available online at <http://www.LD.org/stateofd>.

² “Frequently Asked Questions About Dyslexia,” The International Dyslexia Association. Available online at <http://www.interdys.org/FAQ.htm>.

³ “The State of Learning Disabilities 2009,” National Center for Learning Disabilities. Available online at <http://www.LD.org/stateofd>.

⁴ “Frequently Asked Questions About Dyslexia,” The International Dyslexia Association. Available online at <http://www.interdys.org/FAQ.htm>.

⁵ “Just the Facts...Dyslexia Basics.” The International Dyslexia Association. Available online at http://www.interdys.org/ewebeditpro5/upload/Basics_Fact_Sheet_5-08-08.pdf.

- The exact causes of dyslexia are still not completely clear, but anatomical and brain imagery studies show differences in the way the brains of people with dyslexia develop and function.⁶

Experiencing dyslexia

- Dyslexia affects individuals throughout their lives; however, its impact can change at different stages in a person's life. It is referred to as a learning disability because dyslexia can make it very difficult for a student to succeed academically in the typical instructional environment, and in its more severe forms, will qualify a student for special education, special accommodations, or extra support services.⁷
- Individuals with learning disabilities are not powerless. Overtime, they can learn to compensate for their weaknesses, and if they receive support early enough, most people with learning disabilities can develop good academic and related skills and enjoy great success academically and professionally. While compensating and dedication does allow people with learning disabilities to succeed, evidence suggests that the reading and writing problems associated with LD persist throughout a person's life, with the gap between potential and performance persisting indefinitely.⁸ While many people succeed, in spite of their continuing difficulty with text, even those with high intelligence are often not proficient, readers meaning lost opportunities in the work place and high education. Today's plethora of technology tools has been particularly helpful to both children and adults with learning disabilities.⁹

How many people have dyslexia?

- As many as 15 to 20 percent of the population as a whole has some of the symptoms of dyslexia, such as slow or inaccurate reading, poor spelling, poor writing, or mixing up similar words.¹⁰
- 6-7 percent of the school population is classified as having a learning disability, and 85 percent of those students with learning disabilities have a learning disability in reading and language processing.¹¹
- Only a small percentage –between 25 and 35 percent - of students with learning disabilities are being provided with assistive technology to support their instruction and learning.¹²
- In schools today, the cost of educating a student with a learning disability is 1.6 times the expenditure for a general education student.¹³

⁶ "Frequently Asked Questions About Dyslexia," The International Dyslexia Association. Available online at <http://www.interdys.org/FAQ.htm>.

⁷ "Frequently Asked Questions About Dyslexia," The International Dyslexia Association. Available online at <http://www.interdys.org/FAQ.htm>.

⁸ For more discussion of the lifelong persistence of LD, see the LEARNING DISABILITIES BEFORE 1965 Section below. Clinical evidence confirming this point includes the 1988 studies by K. A. Kavale "The Long-Term Consequences of Learning Disabilities." (M. C. Wang et al. eds.) *Handbook of Special Education: Research and Practice*. (Pergamon Press 1988). See also Marshall H. Raskind et al., *Patterns of Change and Predictors of Success in Individuals with Learning Disabilities: Results from a Twenty-Year Longitudinal Study*. (Frostig Center 1998); F.J. Hoffman et al., "Needs of Learning Disabled Adults," 20 *Journal of Learning Disabilities* 152 (1987); P.J. Gerber et al., "Identifying Alterable Patterns in Employment Success for Highly Successful Adults with Learning Disabilities." 25 *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 475-487 (1992); and *Adults with Learning Disabilities: Clinical Studies*. (D.J. Johnson & J.W. Blalock eds. 1987).

⁹ "The State of Learning Disabilities 2009," National Center for Learning Disabilities. Available online at <http://www.LD.org/stateofld>.

¹⁰ "Just the Facts...Dyslexia Basics." The International Dyslexia Association. Available online at http://www.interdys.org/ewebeditpro5/upload/Basics_Fact_Sheet_5-08-08.pdf.

¹¹ "Just the Facts...Dyslexia Basics." The International Dyslexia Association. Available online at http://www.interdys.org/ewebeditpro5/upload/Basics_Fact_Sheet_5-08-08.pdf.

¹² "The State of Learning Disabilities 2009," National Center for Learning Disabilities. Available online at <http://www.LD.org/stateofld>.

¹³ "The State of Learning Disabilities 2009," National Center for Learning Disabilities. Available online at <http://www.LD.org/stateofld>.