

The chart below lists both the strengths and the difficulties typical of people with dyslexia at different stages in their education. It is typical for all people to exhibit some of these difficulties for short periods in their development. A person with dyslexia exhibits several of these difficulties over time, and they interfere with his or her learning. The challenges they face are “often **unexpected** in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction” (Adapted from International Dyslexia Association, 2002). These challenges are surrounded by a “sea of strengths” that deepens in later years. This can make identification more difficult as a student learns and applies compensatory strategies that may mask difficulties in reading, spelling, and language. Taken together, these lists provide us with clues about the characteristics of dyslexia.

	STRENGTHS	DIFFICULTIES
Pre-K to Grade 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Curiosity</li> <li>➤ A great imagination</li> <li>➤ Creative</li> <li>➤ Eager to embrace new ideas</li> <li>➤ Maturity beyond their years</li> </ul>	<p><b>General</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A family history of reading/spelling difficulties</li> <li>➤ Confusing left and right; delay in hand dominance</li> <li>➤ Trouble reciting the alphabet, counting numbers, days of the week or other common word sequences</li> <li>➤ Trouble learning common nursery rhymes such as “Jack and Jill”</li> <li>➤ Difficulty recognizing rhyming patterns like <i>cat, bat, rat</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Speaking</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Late learning to talk</li> <li>➤ Mispronouncing words by mixing up sounds (<i>mawn lower</i>)</li> <li>➤ Trouble recognizing letters, matching letters to sounds, or blending sounds into speech</li> </ul>
Grades 1 to 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The ability to solve practical problems</li> <li>➤ Strong listening comprehension</li> <li>➤ Easily understands new concepts</li> <li>➤ Large vocabulary for his/her age</li> <li>➤ Enjoyment in solving puzzles</li> <li>➤ Talent at building models</li> </ul>	<p><b>General</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Lacks automaticity with math facts and numbers</li> </ul> <p><b>Speaking</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Mispronouncing words by mixing up sounds (<i>cinnamon for synonym</i>)</li> <li>➤ Difficulty breaking spoken words apart into sounds or syllables</li> </ul> <p><b>Reading/Spelling</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Difficulty sounding out simple words like <i>cat, map, nap</i></li> <li>➤ Complains about how hard reading is, or avoids reading</li> <li>➤ Trouble reading/spelling sounds in sequence (<i>left for felt</i>)</li> <li>➤ Reading is not accurate, is slow, or is not smooth</li> <li>➤ Spells words incorrectly, even high frequency words like <i>was, were, then</i></li> <li>➤ May rely heavily on pictures or memorization when reading</li> </ul>

	STRENGTHS	DIFFICULTIES
Grades 3 to 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Large vocabulary for his/her age</li> <li>➤ Strong comprehension of stories read/told to him</li> <li>➤ Strong thinking skills: conceptualization, reasoning, imagination, abstraction</li> <li>➤ Ability to get the “big picture”</li> </ul>	<p><b>General</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Trouble remembering dates, names, telephone numbers, random lists, math facts</li> <li>➤ Low self-esteem or anxiety</li> </ul> <p><b>Speaking</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Confuses words that sound alike, such as saying <i>tornado</i> for <i>volcano</i>, <i>lotion</i> for <i>ocean</i></li> <li>➤ Using imprecise language, for example, <i>stuff</i>, <i>things</i></li> <li>➤ Large discrepancy between oral and written skills</li> </ul> <p><b>Reading/Spelling</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Reading is slow, inaccurate, or halting/choppy</li> <li>➤ Trouble reading unfamiliar words, cannot sound out multisyllabic words</li> <li>➤ Doesn't seem to have strategies for sounding out new words</li> <li>➤ Avoids reading aloud</li> <li>➤ Poor spelling and illegible handwriting</li> <li>➤ Avoids reading and writing tasks; strongly prefers word processing</li> </ul>
Grades 6 to 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A high level of understanding of what is read aloud</li> <li>➤ A sophisticated spoken vocabulary</li> <li>➤ Strong in areas not dependent on reading, such as math, computers, and visual arts</li> <li>➤ Strong in conceptual subjects, such as philosophy, science, social studies, and creative writing</li> <li>➤ Exceptional empathy and warmth, emotional intelligence</li> </ul>	<p><b>General</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Has trouble finishing tests on time</li> <li>➤ Difficulty learning a foreign language or reading music</li> <li>➤ Low self-esteem or anxiety</li> <li>➤ Has to study more than peers</li> </ul> <p><b>Speaking</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Pausing or hesitating when speaking, using <i>um</i> and <i>like</i> repeatedly</li> <li>➤ Mispronunciation of multisyllabic, unfamiliar, or complicated words</li> <li>➤ Using imprecise language, for example, <i>stuff</i>, <i>things</i></li> <li>➤ Seems to need extra time to respond to questions</li> <li>➤ Large disparity between oral and written skills</li> </ul> <p><b>Reading/spelling</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Reading and writing is slower than peers</li> <li>➤ Needs to reread for meaning</li> <li>➤ May answer higher-level questions about text but miss easier, literal questions</li> <li>➤ Avoids writing; compositions are brief and simplistic</li> <li>➤ Weak spelling and messy handwriting</li> <li>➤ Suffers fatigue when reading; avoids reading</li> </ul>

STRENGTHS	DIFFICULTIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Successful when focused on a highly specialized content area</li> <li>➤ Excellence in writing if content and not spelling are important</li> <li>➤ Articulately expresses ideas and feelings</li> <li>➤ Exceptional empathy and warmth, emotional intelligence</li> <li>➤ Success in areas not dependent on rote memory</li> <li>➤ Talent for high-level conceptualization and original insights</li> <li>➤ Big-picture thinking</li> <li>➤ Inclination to think outside of the box</li> <li>➤ Noticeable resilience and ability to adapt</li> </ul>	<p><b>General</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Low self-esteem or anxiety</li> <li>➤ Knowledge not reflected in standardized test scores</li> <li>➤ Has to study more than peers</li> </ul> <p><b>Speaking</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Not fluent, often anxious while speaking</li> <li>➤ Pausing or hesitating when speaking, using <i>um</i> and <i>like</i> repeatedly</li> <li>➤ Using imprecise language, for example, <i>stuff</i>, <i>things</i></li> <li>➤ Struggles to retrieve words (“tip of my tongue” moments)</li> <li>➤ Often pronounces names incorrectly; trips over parts of words; avoids saying words that might be mispronounced</li> <li>➤ Difficulty remembering names of people and places; confuses names that sound alike</li> <li>➤ Struggles when put on the spot in conversations or writing</li> <li>➤ Spoken vocabulary is smaller than listening vocabulary</li> </ul> <p><b>Reading/spelling</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Reading requires great effort and at a slow pace</li> <li>➤ Rarely reads for pleasure</li> <li>➤ Avoids reading aloud</li> <li>➤ Avoids writing; handwritten compositions are brief and simplistic</li> <li>➤ Typed compositions can be disorganized and lack cohesion</li> <li>➤ Weak spelling and illegible handwriting</li> <li>➤ Difficulty determining the correct spelling of words, even when using a spell checker while word processing</li> </ul>