

At the Dyslexia and Diagnostic Treatment Center, we assess for all the signs of dyslexia and are knowledgeable about age-appropriate academic expectations. The application of these benchmarks is provided below for you to compare to your child's abilities. At the Dyslexia Diagnostic and Treatment Center, we'll assess these abilities, and treat any areas where your child may need some extra support:

A Guide to the Development of Reading-Related Skills

Early Preschool Accomplishments (age 3-4)

- Begins to develop awareness that, like a roll of perforated postage stamps, sentences and then words come apart
- Shows an interest in the sounds of language; repeats and plays with sounds, especially rhymes; recites nursery rhymes ("Humpty Dumpty," "Jack and Jill")?
- Identifies ten alphabet letters, most likely from his or her own name

Late Preschool Accomplishments (age 4-5)

- Breaks spoken words into syllables (such as today – *to-day*) (50 percent of children can count the number of syllables in a spoken word)
- Begins to break words into phonemes (20 percent of children can count the number of phonemes in a spoken word)
- Recognizes and names a growing number of letters

Beginning Kindergarten Accomplishments (age 5–5 ½)

- Compares whether two spoken words rhyme: Do *cat* and *mat* rhyme? Do *hope* and *mat* rhyme?
- Names a word that rhymes with a simple word like *cat* or *make*
- Recognized and names just about all upper-and lowercase letters

End of Kindergarten Accomplishments (age 5½-6)

Spoken language:

- Continues to progress in breaking spoken words into syllables (90 percent of children can count the number of syllables in a word)
- Identifies which of three spoken words or pictures begin with the same sound as a given word (when instructed: Tell me which word begins with the same first sound as *car*: *mat*, *can*, or *dog* – he answers *can*) or with a different sound than the other two (when asked which word begins with a different sound – *man*, *dog*, or *mud* – he answers *dog*)
- Pronounces the beginning sound in a word (when asked to say the first sound of the word *mat*, he answers "mmm")
- Counts the number of phonemes in a small word (when asked to count the sounds he hears in *me*, he finds two: accomplished by 70-80 percent of children)
- Blends (pushes together) phonemes into a complete word (when asked what word the sounds "zzzz," "oo" make, he answers *zoo*)

Print:

- Names all the letters of the alphabet
- Knows the sounds of almost all the letters of the alphabet

- Masters the alphabetic principle; understands that the sequence of letters within a written word represents the number and sequence of sounds heard in the spoken word
- Begins to decode simple words
- Recognizes a growing number of common words by sight (*you, my, are, is, the*)
- Uses *invented spelling*, such as writing *krr* for *car*
- Writes many uppercase and lowercase letters
- Writes his or her own name (first and last) and names of family members or pets

First Grade Accomplishments (age 6-7)

Spoken Language:

- Counts the sounds in longer (three-phoneme) words (when asked, Can you count the sounds you hear in *same?*, he answers *three*)
- Says what word remains if a given sounds is taken away from the beginning or end of a three-phoneme word (when instructed, Say *bat* without saying the "*b*", he says *at*)
- Blends the sounds in three-phoneme words (when asked, What word do the sounds, "*m*," "*aaa*," "*n*" form?, he answers *man*)

Print:

- Reads aloud with accuracy and comprehension any text that is meant for first grade
- Links letters to sounds to decode unknown words
- Accurately decodes one-syllable words (real words like *sit* and *bath*, and nonsense words like *zot* and *shan*)
- Knows sounds of common letter groups or word families such as *-ite* and *-ate*
- Recognizes by sight common irregularly spelled words (which do not follow the pattern of a word family), such as *have, said, where, two*
- Has reading vocabulary of three hundred to five hundred words, including sight words and words that are easy to sound out
- Monitors his or her own reading
- Self-corrects if an incorrectly identified word does not fit with cues provided by the letters in the word or with cues provided by the context surrounding the word
- Reads simple instructions such as "Open your book"
- Begins to spell accurately short, easy words

Second Grade Accomplishments (age7-8)

Print:

- Routinely links letters to sounds to decode unknown words
- Begins to learn strategies for breaking multisyllabic words into syllables
- Accurately reads some multisyllable real and nonsense words, such as *Kalamazoo*
- Begins to read with fluency – reads accurately, smoothly, rapidly, and with inflection
- Reads and comprehends fiction and nonfiction meant for second grade
- Represents the complete sound of a word when spelling
- Reads on his own voluntarily

Third Grade Accomplishments (age8-9)

Print:

- Reads aloud with fluency and comprehension any text meant for third grade

- Uses knowledge of prefixes, suffixes, and roots to infer meanings of words
- Reads longer fiction selections and chapter books
- Summarizes the main points from readings
- Correctly spells previously studied words
- Uses a dictionary to learn the meaning of unknown words

Fourth Grade and Above Accomplishments (age 9 and over)

- Read to learn
- Reads for pleasure and for information

Key is knowing how to recognize them at different periods during development. Therefore, I have gathered the clues together to provide three distinct portraits of dyslexia: first, in early childhood from preschool through the first grade: next, in school-age children from second grade on; and, last, in young adults and adults.

Here are some clues to Dyslexia in early childhood. We'll assess for these issues, as well as many others that may cause problems in your child working to his or her fullest potential:

The earliest clues involve mostly spoken language. The very first clue to a language (and reading) problem may be delayed language.

The Preschool Years

- Trouble learning common nursery rhymes such as "jack and Jull" and "Humpty Dumpty"
- A lack of appreciation of rhymes
- Mispronounced words; persistent baby talk
- Difficulty in learning (and remembering) names of letters
- Failure to know the letters in his own name

Kindergarten and First Grade

- Failure to understand that words come apart; for example, that *batboy* can be pulled apart into *bat* and *boy*, and, later on, that the word *bat* can be broken down still further and sounded out as: "b" "aaaa" "t"
- Inability to learn to associate letters with sounds, such as being unable to connect the letter *b* with the "b" sound
- Reading errors that show no connection into the sounds of the letters; for example, the word *big* is read as *goat*
- The inability to read common one-syllable words or to sound out even the simplest of words, such as *mat*, *cat*, *hop*, *nap*
- Complaints about how hard reading is, or running and hiding when it is time to read
- A history of reading problems in parents or siblings

Clues to Dyslexia From Second Grade On

Problems in Speaking

- Mispronunciation of long, unfamiliar, or complicated words; the *fracturing* of words – leaving out parts of words or confusing the order of the parts of words; for example, *aluminum* becomes *amulium*

- Speech that is not fluent – pausing or hesitating often when speaking, lots of *um*'s during speech, no glibness
- The use of imprecise language, such as vague references to *stuff* or *things* instead of the proper name of an object
- Not being able to find the exact word, such as confusing words that sound alike: saying *tornado* instead of *volcano*, substituting *lotion* for *ocean*, or *humanity* for *humidity*
- The need for time to summon an oral response or the inability to come up with a verbal response quickly when questioned
- Difficulty in remembering isolated pieces of verbal information (rote memory) – trouble remembering dates, names, telephone numbers, random lists

Problems in Reading

- Very slow progress in acquiring reading skills
- The lack of a strategy to read new words
- Trouble reading *unknown* (new, unfamiliar) words that must be sounded out; making wild stabs or guesses at reading a word; failure to systematically sound out words
- The inability to read small "function" words such as *that*, *an*, *in*
- Stumbling on reading multisyllable words, or the failure to come close to sounding out the full word
- Omitting parts of words when reading; the failure to decode parts within a word, as if someone had chewed a hole in the middle of the word, such as *conible* for *convertible*
- A terrific fear of reading out loud; the avoidance of oral reading
- Oral reading filled with substitutions, omissions, and mispronunciations
- Oral reading that is sloppy and labored, not smooth or fluent
- Oral reading that lacks inflection and sounds like the reading of a foreign language
- A reliance on context to discern the meaning of what is read
- A better ability to understand words in *context* than to read *isolated* single words
- Disproportionately poor performance on multiple choice tests
- The inability to finish tests on time
- The substitution of words with the same meaning for words in the text he can't pronounce, such as *car* for *automobile*
- Disastrous spelling, with words not resembling the spelling; some spellings may be missed by spell check
- Trouble reading mathematics word problems
- Reading that is very slow and tiring
- Homework that never seems to end, or with parents often recruited as readers
- Messy handwriting despite what may be an excellent facility at word processing – nimble fingers
- Extreme difficulty learning a foreign language
- A lack of enjoyment in reading, and the avoidance of reading books or even a sentence
- The avoidance of reading for pleasure, which seems too exhausting
- Reading whose accuracy improves over time, though it continues to lack fluency and is laborious
- Lowered self-esteem, with pain that is not always visible to others
- A history of reading, spelling, and foreign language problems in family members