

Common Pitfalls to Avoid

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Being aware of the myths surrounding dyslexia will help you avoid common mistakes parents and professionals make when working with children who struggle to read and spell.

Myth

Merriam Webster Dictionary defines a myth as, “An idea or story that is believed by many people but that is not true.” There are surprisingly many myths floating around about dyslexia. Take the true and false quiz below to see how savvy your knowledge is about dyslexia. The answers and explanations will be given after the quiz.

True or False Quiz

1. T F Dyslexia is not real.
2. T F Dyslexia is when people see words and numbers backwards.
3. T F A developmental reading disability is different from dyslexia.
4. T F Kids can't be tested for dyslexia until they are at least 8 years old.
5. T F More boys are dyslexia than girls.
6. T F Very few people are affected by dyslexia.
7. T F People with dyslexia can't read.
8. T F Some people outgrow dyslexia.
9. T F 4 and 5 year olds that show reversals in numbers or letters, are probably dyslexic.
10. T F People with dyslexia (poor reading ability) have lower intelligence (IQ).

Answers and Explanations

Myth #1 *Dyslexia is not real.*

Dyslexia is real. Dyslexia is one of the most researched learning disabilities and has been studied for over 30 years. Dyslexic reading tendencies are proven and can be seen in fMRI brain imaging. Dyslexia is the most common type of learning disability.

Myth #2 *Dyslexia is when people see words and numbers backwards.*

People with dyslexia do not see things backwards. (That would be a super power!) Dyslexia is not a vision problem. Individuals with dyslexia reverse or invert numbers and/or letters (b/p/d, q/g, n/u) because of directionality confusion.

Myth #3 *A developmental reading disability is different from dyslexia.*

The term dyslexia is another word for developmental reading disability or reading disability. The terms can be used interchangeably. There are other reasons children might struggle to read, but dyslexia is the most common form of reading disability. If a child is dyslexic they will also have difficulty with spelling.

Myth #4 *Kids can't be tested for dyslexia until they are at least 8 years old.*

The National Institute of Health (NIH) reports that children can be tested as young as 5 ½ years old with 92% accuracy.

Myth #5 *More boys are dyslexic than girls.*

Prevalence for boys and girls are the same. Boys may be identified more often because they tend to act out more than girls. Their behavior gets them in trouble and gets them noticed. Girls are just as likely to have dyslexia as boys.

Myth #6 *Very few people are affected by dyslexia.*

NIH reports that 1 in 5 children in the United States are dyslexic. Dyslexia affects the same amount of people cross culturally – even when different languages and alphabet systems are used.

Myth #7 *People with dyslexia can't read.*

People with dyslexia can be taught to read if they are given the right type of instruction. The severity of the dyslexia will determine how long a student will be able to get by or cope without specialized instruction. Vocabulary will explode during a student's third grade year. It is usually around this time when children can't get by any longer using coping strategies to read. If children are taught phonemic awareness and a systematic method for sounding out words, they will learn to read up to their potential.

Myth #8 *Some people outgrow dyslexia.*

Dyslexia is a life-long learning disability. It can improve with training and support, but it will never completely go away. Dyslexia will not get better by itself. Intervention is the only way to help dyslexia improve. The earlier a child receives intervention, the better off they will be.

Myth #9 *Four and five year olds that have reversals in numbers or letters, are probably dyslexic.*

It is developmentally appropriate for children to have reversals when they are learning to write. Children should not have reversals after the end of first grade or after two years of handwriting instruction. If children have reversals after the end of first grade look for other signs and symptoms of dyslexia.

Myth #10 *People with dyslexia (poor reading ability) have lower intelligence (IQ).*

There is no correlation between intelligence and dyslexia. In fact, many people with dyslexia are often gifted in other areas. Individuals with dyslexia can have any range of intelligence – low, average, or high. Intelligence and reading and/or spelling ability are not related.

All of the answers to the quiz were false. What was your score? Don't feel badly if you had a few answers wrong. Even up to my last year teaching in the public schools, (2014-2015) other teachers, administrators, reading specialists, and special educators weren't knowledgeable about dyslexia and couldn't tell the difference between myth and fact when it regarded dyslexia. It is up to us to share the facts and advocate for the children we love and support. By the way...these are not the only myths about dyslexia, just some of the most common.

About Kelly

Kelly Steinke, M.A. Ed., NBCT is the founder of READ Learning Educational Services, LLC. Kelly taught special education, primarily to students with learning disabilities, for over 15 years in the Midwest, East Coast, and Pacific Northwest. During this time she became a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT) in Exceptional Needs, earned a Master of Arts Degree in Education (Administration and Leadership), and founded her company, READ Learning Educational Services, LLC. For the past six years, Kelly has served the community as a dyslexia specialist.

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