

THE IMPACT OF DYSLEXIA

WHAT IS DYSLEXIA?

Dyslexia is a neurodevelopmental additional learning need that primarily affects reading, spelling, and writing skills. Characterized by difficulties in phonological processing, dyslexia is not representative of low intelligence but rather a specific learning difficulty that impacts an individual's ability to decode written language accurately and fluently (British Dyslexia Association, 2026). This presentation will aim to provide a critical evaluation of dyslexia discussing the cognitive underpinnings, common manifestations, and the importance of early identification and intervention.

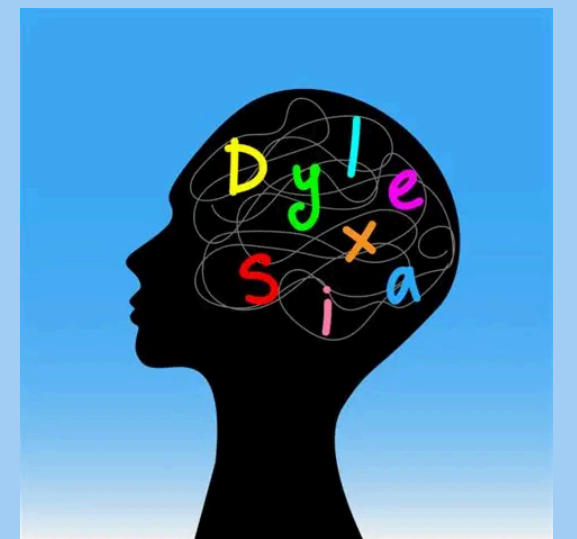
At its core, dyslexia involves a deficit in phonological awareness, which is the ability to recognise and manipulate the sounds of language (Williams, 2022). Individuals with dyslexia often struggle to break down words into their constituent phonemes, making it challenging to sound out unfamiliar words quickly. This phonological deficit can manifest in several ways, including difficulties rhyming, segmenting words into syllables, and blending sounds to form words (Nessy Learning, 2026).

HOW IT IS DIAGNOSED AND IDENTIFIED

One of the primary methods for identifying dyslexia involves the use of standardised assessments. These typically include measures of phonological awareness, reading fluency, and spelling. Phonological awareness assessments, such as the ability to identify and manipulate individual sounds in words, are considered strong predictors of later reading success (National Reading Panel, 2000). However, relying solely on standardized tests can be problematic. Many tests are norm-referenced, meaning a child's performance is compared to that of their peers. This approach may not adequately account for individual differences in learning styles or cultural backgrounds, leading to potential misdiagnosis or delayed identification in diverse populations (Teachers Institute, 2023). Another critical aspect of dyslexia identification is the role of teacher observation and judgment. Teachers are often difficult in young children. Their observations, combined with classroom-based assessments, can provide valuable insights into a child's learning patterns and struggles. However, the accuracy of teacher judgments can be influenced by their level of training and awareness of dyslexia. Without adequate professional development, teachers may misattribute dyslexia symptoms to other factors, such as lack of motivation or attention.

BARRIERS OF NOT BEING DIAGNOSED AT CHILDHOOD

Being diagnosed with dyslexia in adulthood, rather than in childhood, presents a unique set of challenges and barriers that can significantly impact an individual's educational, professional, and personal life. Dyslexia is a neurodevelopmental condition primarily affecting reading, writing, and spelling, is often identified during the early school years. However, a considerable number of individuals remain undiagnosed until adolescence or adulthood, leading to prolonged struggles and missed opportunities (NHS, 2026). One of the primary barriers to late diagnosis is the lack of awareness and understanding of dyslexia among educators, employers, and the public. Many adults with dyslexia have developed compensatory strategies to mask their difficulties, making it harder for others to recognise their underlying challenges. The British Dyslexia Association (2026) have educational resources that can guide adults while navigating being dyslexic. These individuals may have been labelled as underachievers, lazy, or simply not intelligent, leading to a cycle of low self-esteem and academic or professional setbacks. The absence of early intervention means that these individuals have often internalized negative beliefs about their abilities, which can be difficult to overcome even after diagnosis.



SUPPORT STRATEGIES

One of the most widely used multi-sensory approaches is the Orton-Gillingham method. This strategy is structured, sequential, diagnostic and perspective, designed to help with literacy but can also be a beneficial tool to help children who are dyslexic. It incorporates visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic-tactile elements, allowing children to learn through various senses. For instance, when teaching phonics, a teacher might have children trace letters in sand while simultaneously saying the sound associated with the letter. This method not only reinforces the connection between sounds and letters but also helps to solidify memory through physical activity (Reid, 2019). In addition to the Orton-Gillingham method, incorporating technology can also be beneficial for children with dyslexia. Tools such as text-to-speech software and audiobooks can provide alternative ways for children to access reading material. These technologies can help alleviate the frustration often associated with traditional reading methods, allowing children to focus on comprehension rather than decoding words (Rose, 2009).

ADULTS WITH DYSLEXIA

Many adults experience a sense of relief at finally understanding the reasons for their lifelong struggles. However, this relief is often accompanied by feelings of anger, regret, and grief over the missed opportunities and experiences (Succeed with dyslexia, 2022). They may question their past academic and career choices and struggles to reconcile their perceived potential with their actual achievements. The diagnosis can also trigger a re-evaluation of their identity and self-worth, as they come to terms with the fact that their difficulties were not due to a lack of effort or intelligence but due to a neurological difference. This process of self-discovery can be empowering, but can also be emotionally challenging, requiring access to counselling and support to navigate these complex feelings. Being diagnosed with dyslexia at a later age presents numerous barriers that can hinder an individual's access to diagnosis, support, and understanding. The lack of awareness, limited resources, and psychological impact all contribute to the challenges faced by adults with dyslexia. Addressing those barriers requires a multi-dimensional approach, including increased public awareness campaigns, improved access to adult-friendly diagnostic tools and interventions, and greater support for adults with dyslexia in educational and professional settings.

DYSLEXIA IS INCREASING BEING RECOGNISED AS A LEARNING DIFFERENCE AND SHOULD BE USED TO ITS STRENGTHS AND NOT SEEN AS A WEAKNESS, ALLOWING EVERYONE AS A SOCIETY TO FOSTER A MORE INCLUSIVE VALUES AND UNIQUE PERSPECTIVES. DYSLEXIA IS OFTEN MISUNDERSTOOD AS A LEARNING DIFFICULTY, BUT IT IS A NEUROLOGICAL CONDITION THAT AFFECTS READING AND WRITING, IT IS A UNIQUE WAY OF PROCESSING INFORMATION.