

What Dyslexia Is... and Is Not

Texas Education Code §38.003 defines dyslexia and related disorders as “a disorder of constitutional origin manifested by a difficulty in learning to read, write, or spell, despite conventional instruction, adequate intelligence, and sociocultural opportunity.”

Dyslexia is:

- ✓ A reading disorder that affects a person’s ability to read and spell words, despite receiving evidence-based reading instruction
- ✓ Often associated with deficits in phonological awareness, which refers to the ability to identify and manipulate sounds in language
- ✓ A word reading difficulty that is best identified early to provide effective intervention with the greatest chance of minimizing negative effects
- ✓ Present in individuals with a range of intellectual capabilities and with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds

KEY TERMS

Phonological awareness is the understanding of the sound system that makes up a language. Language contains whole words, whole words contain syllables, and syllables contain individual phonemes.

A **phoneme** is the smallest unit of sound in speech. For example, the word *chip* is made up of three phonemes: /ch/ /i/ /p/.

Phonemic awareness is the ability to identify and manipulate individual phonemes, or sounds in a word.

Dyslexia is NOT:

- ✗ A result of poor teaching or a student’s lack of effort
- ✗ A visual disorder that can be corrected with vision therapy
- ✗ A broad term that refers to any and all general difficulties in reading
- ✗ A sign of or result of low intelligence
- ✗ Outgrown over time