

FAQs about vision and dyslexia



By Amanda Morin

If your child has **dyslexia**, you may wonder about the connection between how well your child sees and any trouble with reading. Does your child just need an eye exam and glasses? Can someone have dyslexia and also have a problem with their eyes? Would **vision therapy** from an eye doctor help?

Here are some common questions about vision and dyslexia, and answers to help.

Do eye and vision problems cause dyslexia?

Eye and vision problems don't cause dyslexia. They are unrelated issues that may co-occur, meaning that a child can have both. Kids with dyslexia are no more likely to have eye and vision problems than other kids.

If your child is having trouble reading, however, an eye exam is a good idea. You'll want to correct any vision problem. But kids with dyslexia will still show **signs of dyslexia** even after their vision is corrected with glasses or eye exercises.

In rare cases, kids may have severe problems with visual perception, or **visual processing**. These issues can make reading difficult. But the trouble isn't with vision itself. It's a problem with how the brain recognizes details in visual images and processes what the eyes are seeing.

Is it true that kids with dyslexia see letters backwards and jumbled up in words?

People often think of dyslexia as **reading words backwards** or seeing letters "floating" on the page. But those are very specific and usually short-lived problems. They happen when kids scan text differently because they struggle to **decode** words.

Studies have shown that our natural instinct is to focus first on the middle of something (such as pictures or faces) and move outward. As kids are taught to read and decode, they're learning to go against that instinct.

Struggling readers may go back to it as a way to make sense of what they're seeing. For example, they may scan the page and read the word *was* as *saw*. They may appear to be reading backwards, but they're not really starting at the right and moving left.

Kids also tend to be confused about letters that look like mirror images of each other. (An example of that is *q* and *p*.) They have to learn that these letters aren't the same. It's not uncommon for kids with dyslexia to confuse these letters. That's because their challenges keep them

from gaining as much reading experience as their peers who are fluent readers.

I've heard about "vision therapy." Does that help with dyslexia?

Some people talk about vision therapy as a way to treat dyslexia. But there's no scientific evidence that it helps. In fact, leading groups in the fields of vision and learning have stated that there is not sufficient evidence to support it as a treatment for dyslexia. These groups include the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Psychological Association and the American Academy of Ophthalmology.

The main weaknesses in kids with dyslexia have nothing to do with the eyes. They're problems with language and visual representation of word forms (orthography) in the brain (not in the eyes).

Kids with dyslexia typically have challenges in three areas: **phonological awareness**, **rapid naming**, and semantic skills. That's why they tend to have trouble matching sounds to letters. They also have trouble recognizing and naming letters and words they encounter often. And they may have a hard time understanding the meaning of words and sentences.

These skills aren't based on the eyes, and they won't improve with vision therapy. They improve when a child is taught those skills through **explicit reading instruction**.

In addition to vision therapy, you may have also heard about tinted glasses or colored lenses for dyslexia. This isn't considered a valid

treatment for kids with dyslexia.



See a joint statement about dyslexia and vision from the American Academy of Pediatrics and other medical groups. →

How to help kids with dyslexia

There are many strategies and interventions that can help children with reading issues. Learn about [reading specialists](#) and what they do. You can also [ask about specialized reading programs](#) your school may be using.

Find out what to do [if you're concerned your child might have dyslexia](#).

Key takeaways

- Glasses don't "fix" dyslexia.
- Leading professional organizations don't support vision therapy as a treatment for dyslexia.

- There are many strategies and interventions that do help kids with dyslexia, such as explicit reading instruction.

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