

## ***Dyslexia***

Dyslexia is a challenge with language. Issues often begin with phonological awareness, a language skill that is critical for reading. Kids with poor phonological awareness have trouble recognizing and working with the sounds in words. They are much more likely to struggle with learning to read.

A number of types of specialists can teach kids with dyslexia to recognize word sounds. They can also help them with phonics—connecting letters with sounds, breaking words into sounds, and blending sounds into words. Together, these skills allow kids to sound out words they don't know. That process is known as decoding, and it's fundamental to reading.

Professionals who provide this type of therapy include psychologists, teachers, reading specialists, learning specialists and speech-language pathologists (SLPs) who focus on learning issues. These specialists can use numerous strategies to build phonological awareness and other reading skills. They might work on rhyming, for instance. They also may help kids recognize syllables by having them clap out the ones in their names.

A number of reading programs are designed to help kids with dyslexia. Many are based on an approach called **Orton–Gillingham (O-G)**. The program is multisensory, highly structured and sequential. Experts often consider multisensory instruction to be the gold standard for teaching kids with dyslexia to read. These programs all have a structured approach that is explicit, systematic and cumulative. The programs are intensive and are taught one-on-one or in small groups. Their goal is to improve spoken and written language skills.

### ***Accommodations/Support:***

- *Preferential seating in the front of the room with minimized distractions*
- *Small group teaching*
- *Assistive technology*
- *Audio books*
- *Provide step-by-step directions (oral and written)*
- *Provide extra time for reading and writing*
- *Provide typed copies of classroom notes or provide lesson outline for taking notes*
- *Pre-teach new and important concepts*
- *Large print text for worksheets*
- *Multiple choice or circling response options, rather than filling in the blank*
- *Scribe provided for quiz and test taking*

Information provided by Horizon Academy. Source: [www.understood.org](http://www.understood.org) for Learning and Attention Issues

## ***Dysgraphia***

Kids with dysgraphia don't naturally pick up on the rules of writing. Teachers use explicit instruction to help them learn these rules. They might teach kids where to put verbs and nouns in a sentence, for example, and how and where to use punctuation. They also might teach students a prompt or cue to help them recall the unique parts of a particular kind of writing, like a story. (This is called a mnemonic.)

One area kids with dysgraphia often struggle with is transcription. This broad skill covers handwriting, keyboarding and spelling. Teachers may use multisensory techniques to help kids improve in this area. Assistive technology for writing can also help kids build skills and work around weak spots. Some kids with dysgraphia struggle with the physical act of writing. **Occupational therapy** can often help with this. Therapists can work to improve the hand strength and fine motor coordination needed to type and write by hand. They might also help kids learn the correct arm position and body posture for writing.

Dyslexia and dysgraphia are very different but there's a lot of overlap between them. Working on reading problems through the **Orton-Gillingham (O-G)** approach can also help with writing challenges and in turn, working on writing issues can do the same for reading problems.

### ***Accommodations/Support:***

- *Extended time or quizzes and tests*
- *Provide typed copies of classroom notes or provide lesson outline for taking notes*
- *Scribe provided for quiz and test taking*
- *Hand out worksheets/notes so there's less to copy from the board*
- *Multiple choice response option*
- *Grading done based on what student knows, rather than on handwriting and spelling*
- *Assistance with breaking writing assignments into steps*
- *Student choice of providing cursive or print responses*
- *Student choice of different styles of pencils*
- *Student use of graph paper or lined paper sideways to line up math problems*

Information provided by Horizon Academy. Source: [www.understood.org](http://www.understood.org) for Learning and Attention Issues

## ***Dyscalculia***

Dyscalculia is a disorder that significantly impacts a person's ability to learn and perform in math. There is no single profile of this disability. The signs of dyscalculia will vary from person to person and they will affect people differently at different times in their lives. Some people with dyscalculia have no trouble memorizing basic math facts. It's performing calculations and solving problems that cause trouble. Others struggle with calculation and basic math operations like multiplication and division but they can grasp the big concepts and easily understand how a problem can be solved.

**Multisensory Math** instruction will help students with dyscalculia. This teaching approach uses sight, touch, hearing and movement to give kids different ways to learn skills and understand concepts. Multisensory math techniques can help kids understand what the numbers and symbols represent. These techniques often teach math concepts in a logical way in which one skill builds on the next.

Using objects to see quantities and how they change provides a concrete way of understanding how certain math concepts work. It can also help kids develop number sense and make stronger connections to what they're learning. It's important to help kids connect concrete items to the symbols that represent them. In other words, teach them that the numeral 5 represents five blocks or five claps, or any other multisensory tool.

Kids who have dyscalculia often have dyslexia as well. In fact, it's estimated that 43% to 65% of kids who have math issues also have reading issues. For those kids, improving reading skills can make a big difference in their ability to do math work. That's especially true for word problems.

### ***Accommodations/Support:***

- *Preferential seating in the front of the room with minimized distractions*
- *Assistive technology*
- *Extra time on quizzes and tests*
- *Use of a calculator*
- *Fewer problems assigned for homework*
- *Use of visual aids and manipulatives when solving problems*
- *Student use of graph paper or lined paper sideways to line up math problems*
- *Use of an extra piece of paper to cover up most of what's on a math sheet or test so child can focus on one problem at a time.*

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## ***Executive Functioning***

Executive functioning challenges is a term that refers to weaknesses in a group of key skills we rely on every day. These skills make up the brain's self-management system. Even though it isn't a diagnosis or disorder like ADD/HD is, there are still many ways to help kids who struggle with executive function.

One key skill that this brain system covers is self-regulation. Kids who struggle with this and other executive functions have trouble with working memory, flexible thinking, and attention. If that sounds like ADD/HD, it's because the symptoms of ADD/HD are issues with executive function. Kids with learning issues, dyslexia or dysgraphia, who don't have ADD/HD can also struggle with certain executive skills. That means that different kids may need different treatments for their specific learning issues.

**Organizational coaching** focuses on executive skills. It helps kids learn ways to get, and stay, organized. It also teaches kids strategies for planning and for managing time.

### ***Accommodations/Support:***

- *Preferential seating in the front of the room with minimized distractions*
- *Student is provided step-by-step instructions and must repeat them back*
- *Outline of lesson provided*
- *Daily routines that don't change*
- *Short review provided before teaching a new lesson*
- *Frequent check-ins to make sure student understands the work*
- *Posted schedules and directions*
- *Directions, schedules and assignments read out loud*
- *Simplified and concrete written directions*
- *Highlight key words and ideas on worksheets*
- *Daily to-do list provided on student's desk where student can check-off assignments*
- *Assignment notebook for parents/teachers to check*
- *Break down bigger projects into smaller pieces with more deadlines*
- *Provide a rubric*
- *Multiple choice or circling response options*
- *Grade based on work completed, not work that wasn't finished*
- *Provide student test format in advance so he/she can focus on content*

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## **Working Memory**

Working memory is an ability that allows us to work with information. It helps us learn and perform even basic tasks. Most kids with learning and attention issues have trouble with this vital function. That's especially true of kids with executive functioning issues and ADD/HD.

Working memory is one of the brain's executive functions. It's the ability to hold on to new information so we can turn around and use it in some way. Working memory allows us to hold information without losing track of what we're doing. It is like a temporary sticky note in our brain as it holds new information in place so the brain can work with it briefly and perhaps connect it with other information.

Poor working memory makes it hard for kids to use the information they get in school. In math class, your child might remember the numbers the teacher said to add: 21 and 13. She might not recall what she's supposed to do with them or she might not hold on to that sum of 34 so she can subtract 6 from it.

Following practical instructions may also be difficult. The teacher may ask your child to put her snow boots away, but first hang up her coat. Your child may only do one task or forget which one she's supposed to do first.

Your child may also find that the information she has remembered doesn't make much sense. Because of her working memory problems, her brain didn't package it properly in the first place. If kids learn information in a disjointed way, they have trouble using it later. Using a multisensory approach found through **Orton-Gillingham (O-G)** and **Multisensory Math** will help students who are challenged by a deficit in working memory.

### **Accommodations/Support:**

- *Preferential seating in the front of the room with minimized distractions*
- *Written brief notes to keep in mind bits of information that may be hard to remember*
- *Provide step-by-step directions (oral and written)*
- *Breaking down tasks into a manageable number of steps*
- *Use graphic organizers to help break writing assignments into smaller pieces*
- *Daily to-do list provided on student's desk where student can check-off assignments*
- *Assignment notebook for parents/teachers to check*
- *Child explains back what was taught*
- *Teacher uses images and gestures to reinforce the child's understanding and memory*
- *Provide typed copies of classroom notes or provide lesson outline for taking notes*
- *Multi-sensory strategies*

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## ***Auditory Processing***

Kids with auditory processing disorder can have trouble making sense of the sounds they hear. Sound discrimination means they can have trouble hearing the difference between certain sounds or may hear certain sounds incorrectly. As a result, they may say “dat” for “that”, or “free” for “three”. Speech therapy can help kids with auditory processing disorder make those sounds better and more clearly.

There are many ways to help kids with auditory processing disorder succeed in the classroom including different instructional strategies, classroom accommodations and assistive technology. Kids with auditory processing disorder may have a hard time connecting sounds to written words so reading interventions found within the **Orton-Gillingham (O-G) Approach** that clearly teaches the systems of sounds, letters and grammar will help.

There are no medications to treat auditory processing disorder. However, some kids with auditory processing disorder also have ADD/HD or anxiety, which can be treated with medicine.

### ***Accommodations/Support:***

- *Preferential seating in the front of the room with minimized distractions*
- *Student is provided step-by-step instructions and must repeat them back*
- *Alteration of assignments to minimize the area of weakness*
- *Changes in timing, formatting, setting or presentation of assignments*
- *One-on-one or small group instruction in reading skills and targeting any areas of weakness Closing doors and windows to minimize outside noise*
- *Assistive technology (ex. student headset/teacher microphone)*
- *Teacher uses images and gestures to reinforce the child’s understanding and memory*
- *Quiet rooms for studying and test taking*
- *Teacher speaks at a slightly slower rate and at a slightly higher volume*

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