

Smart Kid. Hates Reading.

Your Questions, Answered

During our live episode, parents and listeners asked some of the questions we hear most often about bright kids who struggle with reading. Here are clear answers, drawn from Jill and Lauren's conversation, plus a next step for each one.

▶ Watch the full episode on YouTube

1 My child's school says she's doing fine, but reading and homework are a daily battle at home. Why don't they see it?

Bright kids with dyslexia often have strengths that hide the problem in class: strong comprehension, quick thinking, good social awareness, and a talent for reading the room and using context clues. They contribute to discussions and can answer questions out loud, so they look like they're keeping up. In the early grades, slow progress with phonics, sight words, and spelling is also easy to mistake for normal development.

Holding it together all day takes a lot of energy, and it often comes out at home as tears, avoidance, or homework that takes hours. If you're seeing that pattern, trust it. A child can be doing "fine" on paper and still be working far harder than they should.

Next step: [Take our free Dyslexia and Learning Disability Quiz to see whether what you're noticing fits a pattern.](#)

2

Why would a bright child act out in class instead of asking for help?

When a smart child knows what they're supposed to be doing but can't do it well, they protect themselves. Some become the class clown so the attention is on the joke instead of the reading. Others become resistant, defiant, or shut down, and this usually grows the longer the struggle goes on.

These behaviors are often a symptom, not the root problem. A behavior plan alone rarely fixes them, because the reading, writing, or processing difficulty underneath is still there. When the underlying skills get stronger, the behavior often improves too.

Next step: [Read Why Bright Kids Struggle in School.](#)

A LISTENER SHARED

"Kids in school made fun of me when I read aloud. I learned to compensate for my dyslexia on my own, and I now have a doctorate."

— Susie, on TikTok

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If my child is bright enough to compensate for dyslexia, do they still need help?

Many bright students compensate for years by memorizing words, guessing from context, leaning on strong listening skills, and simply working harder than everyone else. Plenty go on to great success, like Susie, who went on to earn a doctorate. That persistence is a real strength.

But compensating has a cost: hours of extra effort, lost free time, stress, and often self-esteem. Many adults with dyslexia tell us, "I made it, but I don't want my child to go through what I did." Compensating works around the problem, while strengthening the underlying skills makes reading and writing truly easier. Strategies that carry a student through elementary school also tend to break down as the demands grow in middle school, high school, and college.

Next step: [Watch Episode 52: Stealth Dyslexia, about bright students whose dyslexia goes unnoticed.](#)

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What are the different types of dyslexia?

Reading draws on three skill areas: memory and movement ("nem-kine," forming and writing letters without reversals), auditory ("phone," connecting sounds to letters for phonics), and whole form ("eides," recognizing whole words by sight and recalling them for spelling). Dyslexia can affect one, two, or all three, which creates seven types.

Knowing the type matters, because it tells you what kind of help your child needs. Many traditional dyslexia programs focus only on the auditory, phonics piece. That's why a child may learn to sound out words but still reverse letters or struggle to spell.

THE 3 AREAS

"nem-kine"

Memory – Movement

Remembering and writing letter symbols without reversals

"phone"

Auditory

Connecting sounds to symbols to use phonics for reading and spelling

"eides"

Whole Form

Recognizing whole words by sight and recalling their image for spelling

THE 7 TYPES

Letters

Sounds

Whole Words

1 Dysnemkinesia



2 Dysphonessia



3 Dyseidessia



4 Dysphonessidessia



5 Dysnemkinphonessia



6 Dysnemkinessidessia



7 Dysnemkinphonessidessia



Next step: [Download our free handout, 7 Types of Dyslexia Defined.](#)

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Why can my child read better than they can spell?

Reading gives a child support. Context, pictures, and their own strong comprehension help fill in the gaps. Spelling has none of that. To spell, a child has to recall every sound in the right order and hold a clear mental picture of what the word looks like.

That visual memory piece is why a child can study hard, pass Friday's spelling test, and misspell the same words the next week. Weak spelling isn't a sign of laziness or carelessness. It usually points to an underlying skill that can be strengthened.

Next step: [Learn more about dyslexia and the skills underneath reading and spelling.](#)

6 If dyslexia isn't a vision problem, why do some kids say the words move on the page?

Dyslexia isn't a problem with the eyes. A child can have perfect 20/20 vision and still have dyslexia, and glasses won't fix it. But some dyslexic readers experience visual disorientation: letters seem to move, blur, or run together, and some kids even feel seasick when they read.

That happens in how the brain processes what the eyes see, not in the eyes themselves. It's also a big reason some children avoid reading. Visual processing can be strengthened, which makes the page look stable and reading more comfortable.

Next step: [Watch Episode 98: Dyslexia: Bright Minds, Hidden Roadblocks.](#)

7 My child was diagnosed with dyslexia and ADHD. Is the diagnosis enough to know how to help?

A diagnosis can be a relief, because it finally names what you've been seeing. But a diagnosis is a label, not an explanation. It tells you what is happening, not why reading is so hard for your child or what will make it easier.

When a child has more than one diagnosis, attention often goes to the one tied to behavior, and the reading struggle gets pushed aside. A thorough evaluation looks underneath the labels at specific skills, such as auditory processing, visual processing, working memory, and attention, so help can target the real cause. When those skills get stronger, frustration and behavior problems often ease, too.

Next step: [See how getting started works at Stowell Learning Centers, from your first call to a Functional Evaluation.](#)

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At what age should a child be tested for dyslexia?

Around age six or seven is usually a good time. Letter reversals peak around age five and a half, so some letter confusion at five is a normal part of development. Testing earlier makes sense when the struggle is clearly greater than other kids that age, or when there's a family history of dyslexia. At Stowell Learning Centers, children can be tested as young as five, and a kindergarten pre-screener is available.

Don't let "let's wait and see" stretch on too long. If your gut tells you something is off, it's worth checking out, and finding the problem early protects your child's confidence. And it's never too late. Teens and adults can be tested for dyslexia, too, and the underlying skills can be strengthened at any age.

Next step: [Ready to find out what's going on? Talk with a Learning Specialist about dyslexia testing, or call 877-774-0444.](#)

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Can dyslexia affect executive function skills like memory and organization?

Yes, often. One of the most common links is working memory: the ability to hold information in mind and use it. A child who can only hold about three sounds at a time may lose a longer word before finishing it, or forget a spelling pattern taught a few minutes earlier.

The same weakness shows up outside of reading, too: following multi-step directions, keeping track of assignments and materials, and remembering due dates. Working memory can be visual, auditory, or both, so it helps to know exactly which skills are involved.

Next step: [Watch our most popular episode, Build Your Child's Executive Function with Sarah Ward.](#)

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Why do some students with dyslexia do well in high school but struggle in college?

Many students compensate for years with support at home, close relationships with teachers, accommodations, and hard work. College takes much of that away. Lectures are faster and denser, professors are less personal, and students suddenly have to manage everything on their own.

Students do best when the underlying skills are truly strengthened and they've learned metacognition: noticing when they're overloaded or losing focus, and knowing how to reset. It's never too late. Young adults can build these skills, too.

Next step: [Explore how we strengthen executive function at any age.](#)

A LISTENER SHARED

"I knew from a very young age that something was wrong, but I got marked as a troublemaker instead of anyone helping me, and I developed a hate for school in third grade."

— Roland, on Facebook

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How does struggling with dyslexia affect a child emotionally?

When something that's easy for classmates is hard for them, and everyone can see it, children often start to believe they're "dumb" or "stupid." Reading aloud, trading papers, and reading groups can make the struggle very public. Many adults still carry that pain decades later.

That shame can show up as avoidance, anger, tears, class clowning, or shutting down. Encouragement and emotional support matter, and so does fixing the learning problem itself. When reading gets easier, confidence often comes back.

Next step: [Watch Episode 74: Dyslexia and Imposter Syndrome.](#)

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Is my child going to be okay?

Yes. The struggles you're seeing are real, and they are not laziness or a lack of motivation. They are almost always tied to weak or lagging underlying skills, and those skills can be developed. Dyslexia doesn't define your child's intelligence or potential, and it doesn't have to be a lifelong struggle.

The goal is to address the root causes while protecting the strengths that often come with a dyslexic mind: creativity, big-picture thinking, problem solving, and empathy. The world needs those strengths.

Next step: [If you think something is going on, let's talk about it. Speak with a Learning Specialist about your child and the right next steps, or call 877-774-0444.](#)

More Free Resources

- [7 Types of Dyslexia Defined](#)
Free printable handout explaining each type.
- [Dyslexia Information and Free Resources](#)
Information, guides, and free resources for parents.
- [LD Expert Podcast](#)
More episodes on dyslexia, attention, and learning.
- [Take the Stone Out of the Shoe](#)
Jill Stowell's guide to understanding, supporting, and correcting dyslexia, learning, and attention challenges.

Want to know what's really getting in the way for your child?

[Talk with a Learning Specialist | 877-774-0444](#)

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