

What is dyslexia?

Question 22 from Helping Your Child Become a Reader
(Scanlon, Anderson, Barnes, Morse, & Yurkewecz-Stellato, 2024¹)

There was a time when dyslexia was widely believed to be a “visual processing problem” that caused individuals to “see” things differently (backwards or upside down) which in turn interfered with their ability to learn to read. This was a common belief for a long time. However, scientific research has clearly shown that children who make these kinds of mistakes have normal visual abilities. They DO NOT see things differently. Rather, their difficulty is with remembering which letter or word is called by which name.

Today, the term dyslexia is often used to refer to extreme difficulty learning to read words – when that difficulty continues even though the learner is provided with lots of extra help with developing reading skill and when there are no physical or intellectual causes that might explain the difficulty. Research over the last few decades has clearly shown that early intervention for reading difficulties can dramatically reduce the number of children who experience long-term word reading difficulties.

¹ The complete 23 question booklet can be accessed at: eltep.org/isa-parent-booklet
All individual questions and the complete booklet can be shared for non-commercial purposes.