

Dyslexia

A Support Guide for Parents

Neurodiversity Ireland · Family Resource · August 2026



What is dyslexia?

The Delphi definition of dyslexia (2025) describes it as a set of processing differences that primarily affect reading and spelling, with challenges varying in severity from one child to the next. At Neurodiversity Ireland, we hold this simply: dyslexia is a difference to be supported and accommodated, not a deficit to be fixed.

It is linked to differences in how the brain processes written language, particularly phonological (sound to symbol) information. It is not related to intelligence, motivation, or vision.

Globally, around 1 in 5 people are estimated to be dyslexic. With the right support, dyslexic children can thrive academically, and often excel in areas such as design, science, entrepreneurship, art and leadership.

Common signs of dyslexia in children

Signs vary from child to child, but parents may notice:

- Difficulty learning letters, sounds and spelling patterns
- Slow or effortful reading
- Trouble remembering sequences, such as numbers or days of the week
- Avoiding reading or writing tasks
- Confusion with similar letters or words
- Strong verbal skills or creative thinking, alongside the difficulties above

Not all children show every sign. Early observation and support matter more than matching a checklist exactly.

Strengths often seen in dyslexic children

Many dyslexic children have unique strengths, including:

- Creativity and imagination
- Big-picture or systems thinking
- Problem-solving and innovation
- Visual-spatial reasoning
- Oral storytelling and communication
- Resilience and persistence

Recognising these strengths helps a child build confidence while they receive the support they need.

How dyslexia shows up at school

Dyslexia primarily affects how written language is processed. Reading, spelling and written expression may take more effort and time, particularly in environments that prioritise speed and accuracy. These difficulties can mask real strengths in comprehension, reasoning, creativity and verbal expression.

School settings that rely heavily on written output can increase stress and knock a child's confidence if the right supports are not in place.

What your child might be feeling

In their own words: many dyslexic children describe feeling intelligent but misunderstood. They often know exactly what they want to say but struggle to get it onto the page. Repeated experiences of failure or comparison can lead to anxiety around learning, even when curiosity and intelligence abound.

How dyslexia is identified

Identification is usually carried out by an educational psychologist or specialist teacher, through a formal assessment of literacy and cognitive processing. A diagnosis can support access to accommodations such as assistive technology, reduced written demands, and alternative ways to show learning.

Myth: children need to be 8 or older to be assessed. In fact, children can be assessed from age 6, once they have had around 18 months of formal schooling, roughly late in Senior Infants.

Steps for parents

1. **Talk with the school.** Share your concerns with your child's teacher or learning support team. They can observe learning patterns and may already have informal screening data.
2. **Ask about a public assessment (NEPS).** The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) can provide assessments through schools. These are free but limited and usually require significant evidence of need. Schools are under the impression they have 2 assessments per year, but NEPS told NDI in May 2026, that this is incorrect and there is no limit to the number of assessments allowed per school. We also know there is a capacity problem with NEPS due to staffing levels generally.
3. **Arrange a formal dyslexia assessment.** A psycho-educational assessment by a qualified educational psychologist or specialist provides a definitive evaluation. Ensure assessors meet recognised qualifications, and follow guidance from Dyslexia Ireland and Neurodiversity Ireland.
4. **Get and use the report.** The report should include recommendations for the school: teaching strategies, supports and accommodations. Parents usually arrange a meeting with the school principal or learning support team to discuss implementing them.
5. **Support outside school.** Workshops, tutoring and reading support services can help a child build literacy confidence. All literacy strategies should be Structured Literacy programmes based on the Science of Reading.

School supports can be provided on a needs basis. A formal report is helpful, but is not always required before a school puts interventions in place.

Available accommodations

Exemption from Irish

Irish (Gaeilge) is compulsory in Irish schools. Children with significant, ongoing literacy difficulties, including dyslexia, may qualify for an exemption. A school will generally look for:

- Appropriate learning support already in place
- Literacy difficulties that are severe and ongoing
- Standardised test scores that remain very low despite that support

Dyslexia Ireland notes that children typically need to be at least in Second Class to apply, and that schools assess against the 10th percentile on standardised tests of word reading, reading comprehension or spelling. A formal diagnosis is helpful but not always required.

Parents apply in writing through the school principal, using the Department of Education's official form. Schools must respond within 21 school days. If granted, the exemption certificate is valid right through primary and secondary school. If an application is refused, parents can appeal within 30 days using the formal appeal form.

Learn more: [Dyslexia Ireland - Irish Exemption](#)

Assistive technology

Children with dyslexia may also benefit from:

- Text-to-speech software
- Audiobooks and digital reading tools
- Word processors and spellcheck software
- Mind-mapping or visual planning tools

Useful resources

- **Dyslexia Ireland:** <https://dyslexia.ie> national charity and information hub
- **Dyslexia Hub Ireland:** <https://dyslexiahub.ie> learning resources and parent supports
- **Made By Dyslexia:** <https://www.madebydyslexia.org> global strengths-based dyslexia charity
- **British Dyslexia Association:** <https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk> information, standards and training
- **The Literacy School:** Structured Literacy Guide, for Structured Literacy programmes grounded in the Science of Reading
- <https://dcode dyslexia.com> - Mary Moran has spent a career spanning over three decades teaching dyslexic students. Trained by Katherine Weldin de Blois (MSc Ed), in the gold-standard Orton-Gillingham approach to deliver teaching using a structured literacy method, Mary's passion lies in giving struggling readers the lifelong gift of literacy. Dcode is informed by the unique teaching style that Mary developed over the course of her career and packages her methodology into a simple, interactive, and highly effective reading programme, so that every child can become a happy and confident reader.

How Neurodiversity Ireland can help

Neurodiversity Ireland runs dyslexia-specific parent information sessions and how-to guides, so families can advocate for the right supports both at home and at school. Our approach is Structured Literacy, grounded in the Science of Reading, and built for children who are dyslexic alongside another neurodivergent profile, including children who are Gestalt Language Processors.

If you would like to talk to us about your child, or join an upcoming parent information session, please get in touch.

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