

Learning about Your Child's Reading Development

Facilitator's Guide: Signs of Risk for Reading Difficulties

For more information: <https://improvingliteracy.org/kit/learning-about-your-childs-reading-development>

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Overview of The National Center on Improving Literacy (NCIL)

The NCIL's mission is to increase access to, and use of, evidence-based approaches to screen, identify, and teach pre-K to grade 12 students with literacy-related disabilities, including dyslexia.



Note: This slide explains why the topic is important/the session big ideas.

Signs of risk for reading difficulties. There are signs to look for in your child that may show a risk for reading difficulties later. These difficulties are often noticeable very early when your child has trouble learning key language and early literacy skills compared to his peers. You play an important role in your child's education by sharing signs of risk in your child with others.

Learning Objectives

- To learn evidence-based information on the signs of risk for reading difficulties in children at different age levels
- To improve ability to determine whether children have reading difficulties
- To learn how to interact with children in ways that support and monitor their language and reading development

Note: Participant learning objectives to display and communicate when the workshop begins

Signs of Risk for Reading Difficulties



| Emergent and Early Readers Have Trouble | Transitional and Fluent Readers Have Trouble |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Noticing and naming rhymes | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Sounding out unknown words (decoding) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Noticing and playing with individual sounds in spoken words (phonemic awareness) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Remembering words seen many times before (sight word recognition) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Naming the letters of the alphabet (Including in their own name) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Reading fluently ("like you talk") instead of word by word |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Quickly naming aloud a series of familiar items, like letters, numbers, and colors (rapid naming) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Remembering the ideas in reading material (comprehension)● Spelling words correctly |



Signs of risk for reading difficulties for emergent and early readers include trouble noticing and naming rhymes; noticing and playing with individual sounds in spoken words (phonemic awareness); naming the letters of the alphabet by the start of kindergarten and naming the letters in your name; or quickly naming aloud a series of familiar items, like letters, numbers, or colors (rapid naming). Signs of risk for reading difficulties for transitional and fluent readers include trouble sounding out unknown words (decoding); remembering words seen many times before (sight word recognition); reading fluently 'like you talk' instead of word by word; remembering the ideas in reading material (comprehension); or spelling words correctly. Click Try It Out for steps for observing your child and taking notes.

Note: Click Try It Out for How to Look For Patterns in Your Child and read aloud the At a Glance statements and then the Key Takeaways statements to participants. Encourage participants to review the additional information on their own.

Signs of Risk for Reading Difficulties



Screening
Assessment

Is there an issue?



Diagnostic
Assessment

What is the issue?



Try It Out

Learn More



To spot difficulties, your child's school may first screen all children for reading difficulties at different times during the year. The purpose of screening is to see if your child has an issue that may affect her reading development. If so, additional reading assessments are often necessary to pinpoint what the issue might be. These are called diagnostic assessments. If your child's school administers screening assessments, ask your child's teacher about her scores and what they tell you about whether she is on track to meet grade level goals and if additional assessments are needed. Assessment information helps to inform your child's reading profile and the type of instruction and support that is best matched to her needs. To determine the assessment practices used in your child's school, ask: what screening practices for literacy does the school use and when?, how are children with reading difficulties identified?, what information does the school collect on my child's literacy progress?, and how is this information used to make decisions about my child's literacy needs? Click Try It Out for help understanding the specific problems your child may be having with reading and suggestions for things to do. Click Learn More for what to do if you're concerned your child may have a language or reading issue.

Note: Click Try It Out and tell participants that Target the Problem! Is a tool to help parents and classroom teachers understand the specific problems a child may be having with reading. They'll find practical suggestions on what they (and kids themselves) can do to help children with their reading difficulties.

Note: Click Learn More for My Child Is Falling Behind in School. Now What? and read the main

points in bold aloud to participants. Encourage participants to review the additional information on their own.

Resource: Distribute copies, review, and discuss Route to Reading: Do Regular Performance Checks with participants. Tell participants they can ask these questions when talking to their child's teacher.

Signs of Risk for Reading Difficulties



What is the issue?



Watch
Video

Learn More

Video provided by:



Watch on YouTube



Difficulties can be spotted early, so please speak to your child's teacher or pediatrician if you have concerns about his progress at school. Share if there is a family history of reading difficulties. Tell if he has language delays, trouble remembering the letters in his name, avoids books, refuses to read, says that reading is hard, or feels embarrassed about reading aloud. Ask for your child to be assessed on the skills that he is having difficulty with and to discuss the results. Questions to ask your child's school include, what evidence-based literacy instruction and intervention are used?, what types of support are offered to my child if he or she is struggling to read or write?, and what accommodations does the school provide to help my child read or write? All children can learn to read but some need additional help early to read well. Click Watch Video for what to do if you're worried about your child's reading. Click Learn More Talking for ways to talk to your child about his language or reading issues.

Video: Play Read Charlotte (1.35) In second or third grade, most kids read smoothly at a natural speed and with expression. It is important to understand the warning signs of a learning issue. The earlier a learning issue is detected the better chance a child will have of succeeding in school. It is important to know that children with learning disabilities process information differently. At yourself, one: Is your child making a lot of errors when reading and the task of reading seems to be difficult? Two: Is their spelling not connected to the sounds they hear in words? Often there are wild guesses as to how a word is spelled. Three: Has the teacher mentioned it takes a long time for your child to copy from the board? Four: Does your child struggle to follow along as you or the teacher reads a story aloud? Do they seem distracted or like their minds are wandering? If you read them a story and they have no understanding of what happened, that is a warning sign that there might be a problem. The earlier you can get help for your child the better. Teachers are only with your child for nine months. But parents may have observed and sensed the problem over the course of years. Don't hesitate to ask for help and not be satisfied until there is a solution in place. Whether that means a school evaluation, private tutoring, or a reading evaluation with a licensed child psychologist.

Note: **Click** Learn More for How to Talk to Your Child About Learning and Thinking Differences and read aloud the At a Glance statements and then the Key Takeaways statements to participants. Encourage participants to review the additional information on their own.

Resource: **Distribute copies, review, and discuss** Route to Reading: Repair as Needed with participants. Tell participants they can ask these questions when talking to their child's teacher.

Signs of Risk for Reading Difficulties



[Child Find](#)

[Learn More](#)

If you or your child's teacher is concerned that her reading difficulties are unexpected and unusual compared to her learning in other areas, seek further information from the school and others about next steps. One type of learning disability in reading is dyslexia. Click the graphic for an explanation. Other learning disabilities in reading may be related to deficits in comprehension or a combination of skills. You can request that the school evaluate your child for a reading disability if you suspect one. In the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the federal special education law, a child with characteristics of dyslexia or other literacy-related disabilities may qualify for IDEA services under the category of a specific learning disability. Click [Child Find](#) for more information about this legal requirement. Click [Learn More](#) for questions often asked by parents about special education services.

Resource: [Distribute copies, review, and discuss What is Dyslexia?](#) with participants.

Note: [Click](#) [Child Find](#) and read aloud the [At a Glance](#) statements and then the [Key Takeaways](#) statements to participants. Encourage participants to review the additional information on their own.

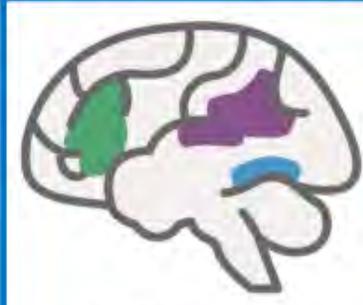
Note: [Click](#) [Learn More](#) for [Questions Often Asked by Parents about Special Education Services](#) and tell participants that this resource answers questions often asked by parents about special education services, including about evaluation and eligibility. Encourage

participants to review the additional information on their own.

Signs of Risk for Reading Difficulties



Dyslexia and the Brain



No Dyslexia



Has Dyslexia

 **Watch Video**

Video provided by:

 **Understood**

Watch on YouTube



Dyslexia is a life-long condition that is neurobiological in nature. The brains of children with dyslexia work differently than children without it. Children with dyslexia trigger different brain areas and use different pathways when reading than typical readers. When children with dyslexia receive successful intervention, it changes how the brain works. How does the reading brain work? Click Watch Video to learn how brain scientists, Like Dr. Guinevere Eden, are working to figure out why some children struggle to read and others don't.

Video: Play Watch Video Understood (9.34)

Guinevere Eden: We've known for some time what children with dyslexia look like in terms of their reading skills, ah, skills in areas of language – like rhyming and what's called phonemic awareness. But the brain research has really added to this by showing us what the brain looks like when people read and what the brain looks like when people with dyslexia read. And there are some differences. When we think about reading, we need to remember that we are really probing a person's ability to understand that words are made up of sounds and that those sounds have a representation in their written counterparts, in the letters. And this is where things can become very difficult for a child, understanding that a word that sounds like one continuous sound, like "cat" or "dog." is actually made up of three sounds that are joined together so seamlessly that you would hardly know that they are, in fact, three sounds and because of that are represented by these three letters. Key Takeaway: Dyslexia involves trouble connecting the sounds that make up words with the letters that represent those sounds. Something that many of us take for granted and forget is just how complicated reading is. There is nothing about our brain that was designed to learn to read. When our brains learn to read, we rearrange them quite significantly, and we draw on a range of skills that were designed to do other things. The same mechanisms that we use when we read, which is accessing the sound representation of language, that area in the brain is involved when we read. It's clearly become directed towards reading and not just spoken language. And it is integrated with areas in the back of the brain that help us recognize words that we then at some point begin to recognize by sight, because the oral part of language is important in helping us put the sound representation on words. But after we see a certain word a number of times, we don't necessarily have to sound it out every time. But we begin to move it to a part of the brain that helps us visually support recognizing a word by sight. The more we see those words, the less we have to actually sound those words out. But we recognize

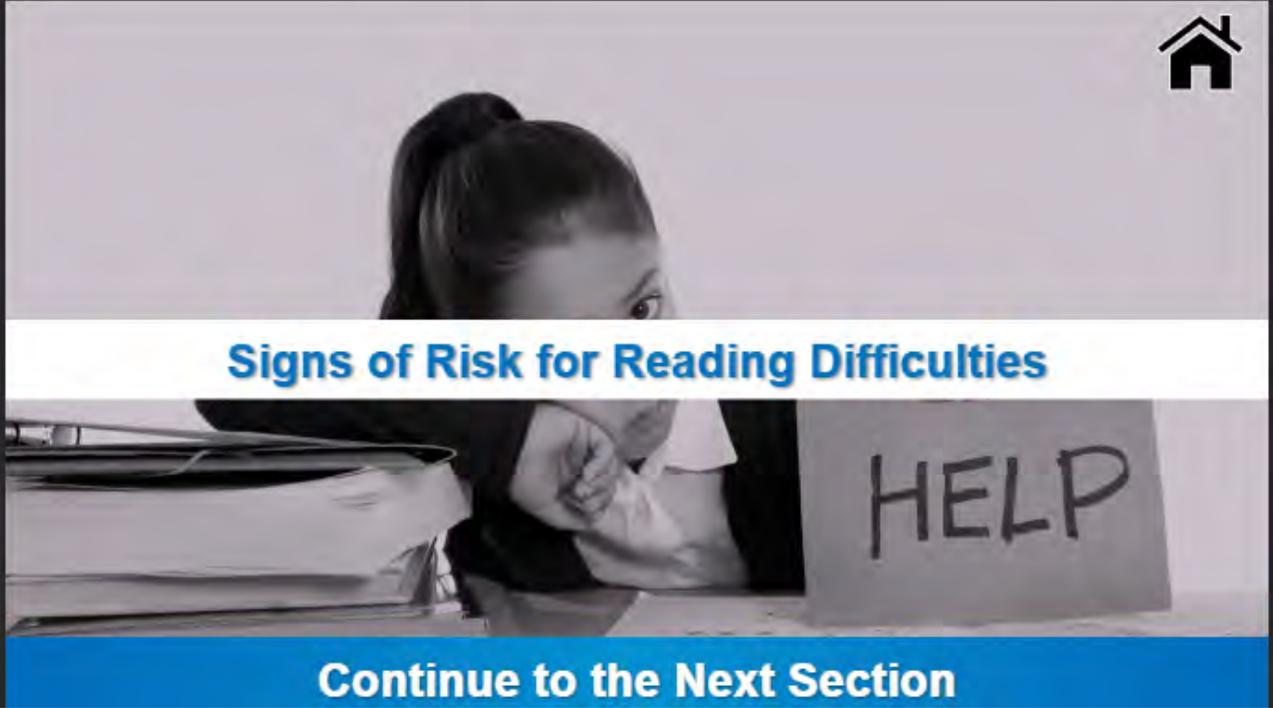
them almost like a picture. And it does seem that, in fact, the area in our brain that we use to see pictures in our visual environment becomes hijacked by reading. Reading, as it established in the brain, says, "Move over. Now I'm going to use this part of the brain to help us recognize word forms." And then we also have a part of the brain that helps us pronounce the word and pull out the right pronunciation, and that is in the front of the brain. So reading is made up of different components. And likewise what we see in the brain is a network that reflects those different components that we use for reading. Key Takeaway: Reading uses different parts of the brain to sound out unfamiliar words; Recognize familiar words by sight; think about how to pronounce the words. When we study children or adults with dyslexia, we find that some of those areas aren't activated quite the same as they are in people who do not have dyslexia. The imaging research has given us a kind of a very nice inside view of the reading brain and how it differs in struggling readers. And it's also given us an opportunity to ask the question: what happens children or adults who have had difficulties with reading when they are given some tutoring and they're given the skills that they need to sound out those words, to really apply the code to allow them to pronounce the words and get better and more fluent at doing that? The research shows that if you are very explicit in instructing children about the rules of phonics and understanding how language is structured and then how it relates to the written counterpart, and if you use methods that show children in a very structured way, in a very intensive way, how that works, that that really is a key component to a successful intervention. And once you understand the relationship between sounds and letters and you can read, then you need some time to become more fluid reader, give your brain the time to not just increase the skills in phonological processing but also now have the experience of encountering words again and again so that you can commit them your visual word memory and have the practice and then go on to use that skill to derive meaning. What isn't considered an effective intervention are the kinds of things that focus on trying to train eye-movement control, trying to change a child's ability to balance, and those kinds of things. Key Takeaway: Effective interventions for kids with dyslexia teach the relationship between sounds and letters in a very explicit and structured way; help struggling readers recognize words they have seen before; do not focus on things like balance or eye movement. Really at the heart of dyslexia is a difficulty in mapping language to print, and it is that skill that these interventions really address as a way to give the child the key that they need to access written language. And the imaging has shown us areas in the brain that now, after the intervention has occurred and after their reading has improved, areas that increase in brain activity and other areas that are compensating and helping out to make that person a better reader. And those kinds of insights tell us something about the mechanisms of reading and struggling readers and perhaps why certain brain areas participate in the process of making a person a stronger reader. And that's where the neuroscience insight helps. The scientists can look at those brain changes and deduce from that, well, what are the areas in that brain that support that change and why those areas? Is it the language areas in the left hemisphere that we use for language and reading, or is it some other areas? And the researchers use that information to try and understand why those brain areas, why did they change, what is it about their relationship to the intervention that makes this a good intervention? Key Takeaway: Researchers are using brain imaging to understand how structured literacy interventions help people with dyslexia. One of the things that we're learning from brain imaging is how malleable the brain is in several different ways. So, for example, when we learn to read, our brain is changing quite dramatically through that process. People who become skilled readers differ from those who never learn to read in brain anatomy and brain function. So reading itself is a process that changes the brain. And then the other thing we can do is ask questions about, well, what about children who are struggling readers and adults who are struggling readers? Maybe as an adult you would think you can't make any more gains in reading, but in fact you can. And your brain is still changing, changing in ways to support those skills to make you become a better reader. Key Takeaway: Our brains are very changeable. Even adults with dyslexia can change their brains to become better readers. And what we are also now beginning to see with brain imaging research is a focus on other skills that we have, skills that maybe even be enhanced in people with dyslexia. So now we see sort of a new phase of research where people are beginning to ask questions like, why is it that we hear reports of people with dyslexia being better at seeing the big picture, maybe at being better at visual-spatial skills, so working in a visual environment and being very good at pulling together a lot of visual information and seeing the big picture. Key Takeaway: Researchers are beginning to study visual-spatial skills and other strengths that may be linked to dyslexia. If you translate that into a laboratory environment, you may test that by asking people to see images where your ability to detect differences really require you taking in the big picture rather than just focusing on the detail. And those have show that people with dyslexia, when faced

with that kind of a task, are better than those who do not have dyslexia. And now the question with the imaging is, how is that information processed in the brain and how does it speak to the other differences we see in those brains? Is there a tradeoff? Does the dyslexia come with a heightened skill or does the experience with dyslexia produce that heightened skill? And what does that look like in the brain? Take Aways: Different parts of the brain are used to sound out unfamiliar words, recognize familiar words by sight and pronounce the words. Effective reading interventions can change the brains of kids and adults who have dyslexia. Brain researchers are starting to study strengths that may be linked to dyslexia.

Guiding question to check for understanding: What are the key takeaways about dyslexia?



Signs of Risk for Reading Difficulties



HELP

[Continue to the Next Section](#)

You have now completed the section on signs of risk for reading difficulties. Click on the bar to continue or the home icon to return to the main menu.

Note: This completes Session 4: Signs of Risk for Reading Difficulties.

Check for Understanding



Think about what you've learned about your child's reading development to help John. John has a son who avoids reading aloud and says that reading is hard. What can John look or listen for when helping his son that might explain his feelings about reading? Choose the answer that best fits.

What should I look or listen for when my son is reading?

- Has trouble noticing and playing with individual sounds in spoken words.
- Has trouble reading "like you talk" instead of word by word.
- Has trouble spelling words correctly.
- Has trouble sounding out unknown words.
- All of the above.



Think about what you've learned about your child's reading development to help John. John has a son who avoids reading aloud and says that reading is hard. What can John look or listen for when helping his son that might explain his feelings about reading? Choose the answer that best fits. Has trouble noticing and playing with individual sounds in spoken words; has trouble sounding out unknown words; has trouble reading "like you talk" instead of word by word; has trouble spelling words correctly; or all of the above. Click submit after choosing your answer.

Note: Provide time for participants to review and discuss the scenario. Then, ask participants to discuss the correct answer with their tablemates. Poll participants on the answer and click Submit to see if correct.

How Can I Learn More



National Center on Improving Literacy

Search the **NCIL Resource Repository** for literacy resources matched to information in this tutorial. Sort by audience, topic area, and resource type to find resources you're looking for. Click the icon to take you there.

Want to learn more? Search the NCIL Resource Repository for literacy resources and activities you can do with your child at home or in your community. Sort by audience, topic area, and resource type to find resources matched to skills in this tutorial. Click the icon to take you there.

How Can I Learn More



Visit the NCIL site to play in the *Kid Zone!* and find a variety of expert-approved strategies to help your child learn to read and write.

Also visit the Kid Zone with your child to read and listen to books and play literacy games. Click the icon to take you there.



You have now completed the tutorial on learning about your child's reading development. Thank you for your participation. If you'd like to return to the main menu, click the bar.

Questions?



Slide to use for soliciting questions from participants and discussing answers on session content and related information at the end of the workshop. Review the big ideas from all three sessions and clarify as needed.

Thank You!

- [insert contact information]

Slide for inserting contact information so participants can communicate with you after the workshop.