

Introduction to Phonemic Awareness

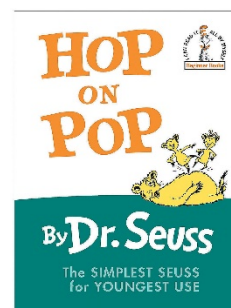
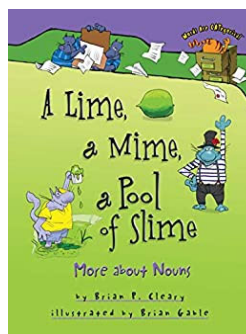
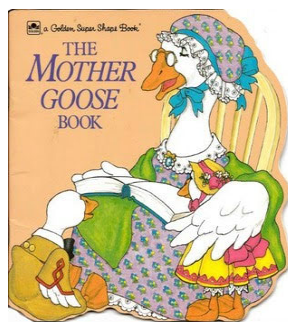
By Dana Brenner

I remember the day that my then 5-year-old son Maverick was riding in the back seat of our van and he started singing along to a song on the radio. He wasn't singing the words, only the last sound of each word. I thought that seemed odd, but since he already had a speech delay, I just contributed it to that. After this, I noticed other issues with his reading. Instead of actually reading words correctly, he would sometimes say other words in their place that were spelled similarly. Often he could read a word on one page but then get it wrong on the next. Searching for how to help Maverick learn to read is what led me to start my journey into the world of dyslexia therapy.

One of the first things I learned about is something called “phonemic awareness”. A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in speech. For example, the word bat is made up of 3 different sounds, b/a/t/. The English alphabet has 26 letters that make up 44 different sounds, and many of these are difficult for children with speech delays and dyslexia to hear when blended into words. A lack of phonemic awareness is something that parents should be aware of and look out for.

A simple 3 step plan of action to help a child develop phonemic awareness:

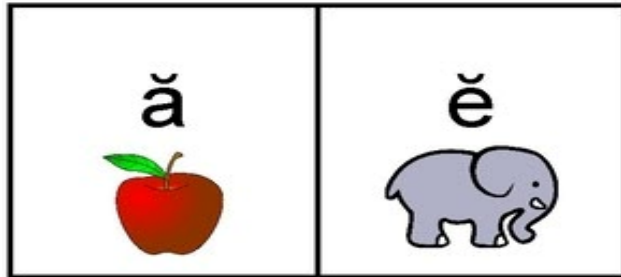
1. Read them nursery rhymes. It may sound silly, but up until recently Mother Goose nursery rhymes were a regular part of a child's early education. Nursery rhymes are a great way to boost imagination and identify rhyming, which is a precursor to increasing fluency. Other notable rhyme authors are Dr. Seuss and Brian Cleary.



Continued on next page.

To create a future for all individuals who struggle with dyslexia and other related reading differences so that they may have richer, more robust lives and access to the tools and resources they need.

2. Kids need to be able to identify the short sounds of the letters of the alphabet. Especially the short sounds of the vowels. All vowels make at least 2 sounds, so many times, readers are confused as to which sound to make. As a general English rule, if a vowel comes before a consonant (VC) the vowel will make its short sound (/a/ as in tag, /e/ as in egg, etc). These can be taught a number of ways, including flashcards or online games that specifically target these skills.*



3. Give kids time to do it on their own. Often, we as parents rush right in and say the word for our kids when they pause during reading times. Please stop. Let them try to figure it out on their own. I never cease to be amazed by how well kids do when they are given a chance to discover a word on their own.

Being the parent or teacher of a struggling reader can be a difficult world to navigate, as it seems like there are always more questions than answers. Much of the time, being an advocate in all of the child's academic work can be required, including reading, writing and math. We need to stay positive and make extra effort to praise their strengths. I once knew of a parent who had paid a large sum of money to put her daughter through several years of different reading programs, only to discover that her daughter still had great difficulty with reading. Obviously, the mother was frustrated, but unfortunately, she began making hurtful remarks in her daughter's presence. As it turned out, the daughter was severely dyslexic and the mother's comments crushed her to the point that, in time, she had to be hospitalized with depression and suicidal thoughts. Even in times of frustration, and there will be many, please remember that these children are already aware of and self-conscious about their struggles. On top of that, they are often labeled as lazy or unmotivated. Nothing could be further from the truth. We need to be our struggling reader's biggest cheerleaders.

**Image from Miss Lowell Teaching Resources -- Teachers Pay Teachers*

"Facets of Dyslexia" will be a reoccurring article that highlights the different facets of dyslexia from the perspective of a child, parent, adult, student, teacher, doctor, professional, etc. This article will be in the person's own words and is meant to put a spotlight on what dyslexia means to them.

If you would like to submit your story, send an email to wibida@gmail.com.

Facets of Dyslexia

All About Dyslexia

What is dyslexia you might ask, well read this article so you know more.
By Tucker Kaiser, age 11

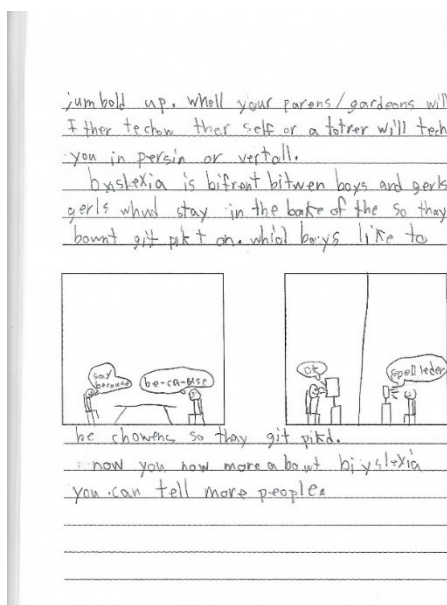
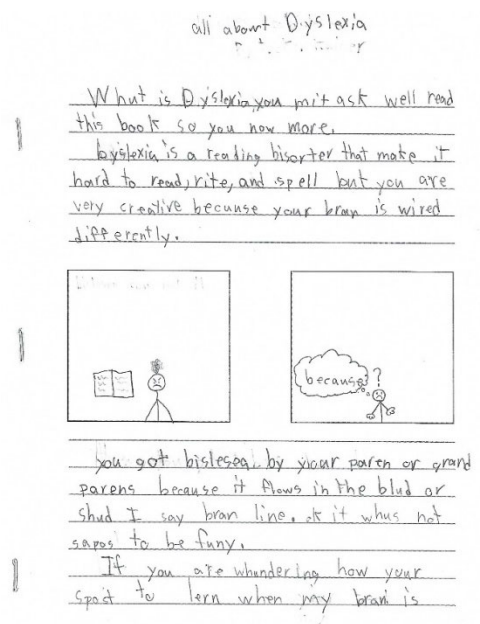
Dyslexia is a reading disorder that makes it hard to read, write and spell but you are very creative because your brain is wired differently.

You get dyslexia by your parents or grandparents because it flows in the blood or should I say brain line. OK it was not supposed to be funny.

If you are wondering how your supposed to learn when my brain is jumbled up. Well your parents/guardians will either teach you themselves or a tutor will teach you in person or virtually.

Dyslexia is different between boys and girls. Girls would stay in the back, so they don't get picked on. While boys like to be clowns, so they get picked.

Now you know more about dyslexia. You can tell more people.



Upcoming Events

- A Special Evening with Dr. Sally Shaywitz
“Overcoming Dyslexia”
March 23, 2021 @ 6-7:30 pm
[Zoom Link](#)
- IDA Upper Midwest Branch
[47th Annual Conference - Online](#)
April 16 – June 16, 2021
Discover. Believe. Succeed
- Dyslexia & Literacy Instruction: Semantics & Fluency
April 21 @ 10:30 am
[Online Event](#)

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