

Guide For Teaching

Your Dyslexic Child  
to **Read**  
From Home



**ebook**

By Liz Dunoon

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# Guide For Teaching

# Your Dyslexic Child To Read From Home

By Liz Dunoon

## You can teach your child to read and here's why?

The day your child came into the world or into your care you began to teach them. On some occasions you did it without even trying like teaching them to speak just by speaking. On other occasions you consciously taught them skills like how to clap, how to greet someone, how to get dressed and how to tie their shoelaces.

As parents we are natural teachers because this is our main role. We teach our children skills to ensure they grow up into well adjusted, happy and successful adults who can make a valuable contribution to society and maybe.... even look after us in our old age.

Sometimes the difficulty in teaching our own children lies in our emotional attachment to them, the deep love we feel for them and the close relationship we share. This closeness can cloud our objectivity. Developing ways to teach your child new skills can be challenging for parents. To be effective and successful we must try not to have unreal expectations, become too easily frustrated or display negative emotions toward them.

Guidelines, strategies and goals can help. Know what you are trying to teach and why before you start. Keep it fast, simple and fun and most importantly use methods that are as different to the school classroom methods as you can find. Formal teaching is often not fun or effective for children with dyslexia. There is more than one way to do it - there are hundreds of ways - so be creative,

The teaching of reading is not a difficult process, yet many parents find the task a daunting one and are unsure how to proceed. The aim of this eBook is to give you the confidence to have a go. As we know reading is a skill, children with dyslexia generally find very difficult.

**“Did you realise the process of learning to read is the same for every child whether they are dyslexic or not.”**

The difference is children with dyslexia often need more exposure to the reading process to master it successfully than do non-dyslexic children. This process basically includes, knowing the letters of the alphabet, decoding the letter symbols into the correct sounds, putting them in the correct order and then creating meaningful words. Dyslexic children often need smaller steps in the process with reading skills broken down into more manageable pieces, more repetition and more practise.

Now I am sure you are beginning to understand why parents who take an active role in teaching their child with dyslexia to read are so important. Children with dyslexia can learn to read; it just takes more time and more effort. Once your child understands this and they begin to see their progress, they usually stay motivated to keep learning.

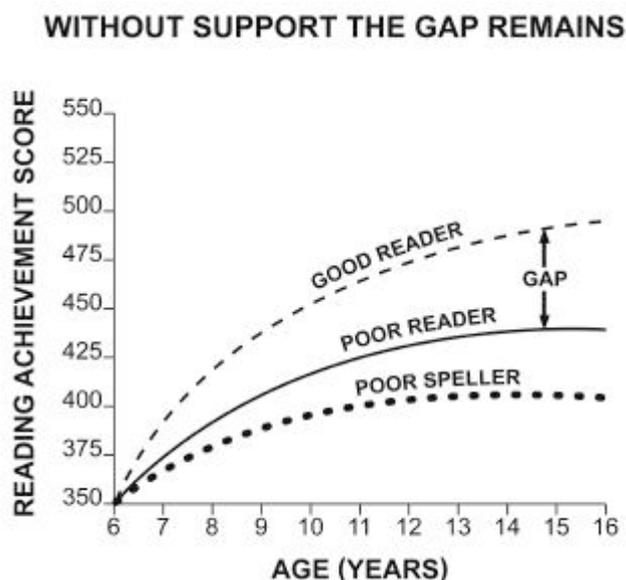
Classroom teachers are teaching so many children at one time and in every classroom around the world there is usually

a huge range of abilities. A child who may be dyslexic and needs extra assistance is often left behind and as the years move on they get further and further behind. Their self-esteem takes a battering and they stop trying. It's generally not that they can't learn to read; they just can't keep up with the rest of their classmates without extra assistance to understand and remember the steps and extra practise to master the reading process. Parents need to instigate this extra assistance and are critical to their child's reading success.

### What will happen to my dyslexic child if I don't help them?

Numerous studies have been conducted over many years documenting what happens when children with specific learning disabilities like dyslexia receive no extra assistance, either via specialised learning programs or extra personalised tutoring.

Almost every graph and table exhibits a similar result and will look something like this.



This graph is not unlike a graph from a study undertaken at the University of Aston in the U.K. The Aston study was based on 500 case studies and basically showed children's performance via a literacy assessment at the beginning of the research study and then with the same children at varying ages over a period of years.

Although specialists will always disagree with what is considered normal. On average you would generally expect an 8 year old child to be reading at an 8 year old level and an 11 year old child to be reading at an 11 year old level. Basically creating a straight graph line of 45 degrees.

In this study of children with specific learning disabilities who did not receive any extra assistance on average they progressed five months in reading, and three months in spelling for every year. Long term this meant that as they got older they got further and further behind. For example one year behind at the age of 7, three-four years at the age of 10 and five-six years at the age of 15.

“The whole idea of thinking children will grow out of dyslexia or adopting a “lets wait and see” approach is something parents need to resist. As parents we can stop the gap widening and help our children catch up when they have fallen behind if we know how.”

### **Why having a good time is critical to cementing learning**

By ‘cementing learning’ I mean learning that is lasting, not forgotten tomorrow, next week, or next month but learning that stays in the long term memory and is a building block for future learning.

### **Casey’s Story**

7 year old, Casey was struggling to remember her alphabet and each sound that the letters represented. Her mum Barbara had come up with a great way of drawing a letter onto a big piece of paper and then turning the letter symbol into a funny drawing of an object that started with that letter. A ‘c’ became a ‘crazy cat’ for example. Casey was

enjoying the activity, her mum was good at drawing and they were laughing hysterically seeing how silly they could make the drawings. All the while Casey was learning the relationship between letter symbols and sounds.

Without even realising it, every time Casey looked at the page, saw the letter symbol, heard the corresponding sound and burst into fits of laughter a chemical was being released in her brain. This chemical is powerful. It is called dopamine. It assists the process of cementing learning into the long-term memory.

Ever wonder why you can remember a funny joke or why one guest speaker at a conference appeals more than another? The humour and laughter that comes with a positive presentation is a powerful way to cement learning.

### **What a parent needs to know to teach their child to read**

The following is a brief overview of what teachers may learn at teachers college.

#### **The English alphabet**

- The English alphabet has 26 letters
- 21 consonants and 5 vowels
- The letters can be written in two ways. As capitals letters and lower case letters. Also known as upper and lower case letters
- Some smaller children may refer to them as big letters and little letters or capitals and little letters
- Capital letters - ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
- Lower case letters - abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

#### **The vowels**

- The vowels are; Aa, Ee, Ii, Oo and Uu
- Yy although not a vowel is the uncommon vowel and can replace a vowel in words For example: my, type
- Every word has a vowel or uncommon vowel in it
- Every syllable has a vowel or uncommon vowel in it.

## The sounds of the letters in the English alphabet - also known as 'phonics'

- The consonant letters have a total of 42 possible sounds in words
- The vowel letters have a total of 19 possible sounds in words and can be long or short sounds. For example c - a - t, the 'a' has a short vowel sound. In the word h - a - y, the 'a' has a long vowel sound.

## Digraph blends

- This is when you put two letters together to make a new sound like 't' and 'h' becomes "th"
- Common digraph blends are; th, ch, sh, ph,
- The following are also common blends but the second letter is not sounded wh, qu, ck, gu
- In these blends kn, wr, gn, ps, the first letter is not sounded

## Consonant blends

- In another type of common consonant blend you can still hear the separate sound that each letter makes. For example "b-l" for blue, blood, bloke, blind, bluster

## Vowel blends

- This is when two vowels come together to make a sound.
- These sounds can be short or long sounds. For example 'oo' as in 'book' (short sound) or 'moon' (long sound).
- There are many variations of vowel blends and the sounds that they make in different words.
- All these words rhyme but have different vowel blends too, shoe, blue, through, queue

## The most commonly used sight word lists

These are list of words that are used very frequently in the English language. Many of them are short words and cannot be sounded out using the phonics method. Because they appear so often in reading material, they make up approximately 25% of all written words. They are usually

taught very early at school on flash cards or repetitively via rote learning. This is because they provide a good foundation of identifiable words and are a stepping-stone to learning new words and reading sentences. They also help to encourage fluency and provide reading confidence. Some examples are:

I, the, my, is, of, to, was, said, and, this.

See below for a list of 152 words your child will need to learn over time to become a fluent reader.

**Note:** A 'sight word' is a word that can be identified just by sight. In other words your child does not need to sound it out to decode it. You will need to give them a few seconds to be able to identify the word by sight. The time it takes will be different for every child.

# 152 WORDS

## Your Child Needs To Learn By Sight

TEACH THEM CREATIVELY ONE BY ONE UNTIL THEY CAN RECOGNISE THEM ALL

↓ [Start here](#)

Go down the columns

a	had	if	old	much	your	these	same
the	not	me	our	over	here	would	think
an	so	yes	out	them	take	time	around
I	as	no	see	this	why	people	work
my	he	or	two	well	off	use	three
and	on	up	who	went	about	other	word
in	we	its	what	when	before	very	does
is	at	he	how	many	could	after	number
it	have	she	way	come	first	most	mum
of	one	big	put	call	little	know	dad
to	with	can	back	here	look	through	mother
was	but	did	been	make	more	today	father
you	they	get	came	must	other	back	sister
that	said	has	down	only	right	good	brother
all	this	him	from	some	their	write	grandma
for	be	so	into	then	there	man	grandpa
his	by	new	just	were	want	woman	aunty
her	do	now	like	than	where	boy	uncle
are	go	off	made	will	which	girl	cousin

## Syllables

A syllable is a unit of pronunciation or speech, having one vowel sound, with or without surrounding consonants, forming the whole or part of a word.

For example

There is one syllable in 'bat' shown like this - bat

There are two syllables in 'carpet' like this - car/pet

There are three syllables in 'ambulance' - am/bu/lance

Clap or tap to identify syllables as you say words

## Fluency

The speed and accuracy at which a person reads.

## Reading for meaning or 'Comprehension'

The accurate meaning or intension gained from the text by an individual when reading.

## The rules of the English language

Because in history the written word came much later than the spoken word there are many variations and inconsistencies in the rules and spelling of words in the English language. There are also many influences on our language like other foreign languages and new words being created all the time.

To try and make sense of the English language a set of rules has been developed to provide basic guidelines for people learning to read, write and spell. These can be very useful.

Here are some examples:

- When adding 'ing' to a word drop the 'e' – 'come' becomes 'coming'.
- Or when you say the word 'mat' the 'a' has a short vowel sound and when you add an 'e' to the end of the word and it becomes 'mate' the 'a' sound becomes it's alphabet name or the long vowel sound.
- i before e, except after c – like in the word 'receive'.

These rules are good to know and there are many more of them. The difficulty with them is there are always words that

will break the rules, causing confusion and spelling errors. There is no doubt about it English can be a very frustrating language to learn. It is not until you look at words through the eyes and ears of a struggling reader that you realise the impact that these inconsistencies have.

Children are born logical and it seems the English language is not. It is important to alleviate your child's concerns, fears and frustrations by recognising this fact when you are helping them to learn to read.

## Grammar

The set of rules that governs the whole system and structure of the English language. A knowledge of grammar provides children with the structural foundation to be able to express themselves when they are speaking and when they are writing. The better their understanding of grammar the more effective they will become at understanding the meaning of words and using them effectively. The following is a list of basic grammar terms and their meanings.

## Morphemes

A morpheme is the smallest linguistic unit within a word, which can carry meaning. It can be a word or it can just be an element of a word. Here are some examples of words broken into morphemes to help you to understand.

unbreakable	un/break/able
cars	car/s
eating	eat/ing
irregular	ir/regular
technique	technique

## Phonemes

A phoneme is a basic abstract sound unit within a word or particular to a language.  
For example:

pig – has 3 phonemes p-i-g

stair – has 4 phonemes s-t-ai-r

Tuesday – has 5 phonemes T-ue-s-d-ay

rectangle – has 8 phonemes r-e-c-t-a-n-g-le

According to Frank Cowling, the son of Keda Cowling, (the author of Toe by Toe), the English language has 44 phonemes and over 1 100 graphemes. A grapheme is a unit (a letter or letters) that represents one phoneme, a single sound. This means there are hundreds of spelling variations for the same sounds in words for our children to learn.

### **Syntax**

Syntax focuses on how words are structured or arranged correctly in phrases and sentences.

### **Semantics**

Semantics is the study of the meaning of words, phrases and sentences.

I could write another whole book on grammar and its correct and incorrect use, but I would probably put you to sleep. Immersing a child in spoken and written language is often the most effective way to teach grammar.

### **Punctuation**

The set of symbols used in writing to separate sentences and to clarify intent and meaning. For example - “talking marks”, exclamation marks!, commas, apostrophe's, question marks?, full stops.

### **The ‘phonic’ versus ‘whole word’ approach to teaching reading**

**The phonic approach** uses the sound symbol relationships of letters in the English language to teach word attack (a child's ability to attempt to decode and read an unknown word). Using phonics provides a strategy that allows for the

decoding of many words. Supporters of the phonic approach to teaching reading often say a large majority of words in the English language can be decoded if your child knows phonics. This method is generally helpful for children with dyslexia.

**The whole language approach** to reading is based on exposing children to many examples of meaningful written text and allowing them to absorb word structures at their own rate to learn to read. For example many children will learn the word 'apple', just by being exposed to it on a certain number of occasions. It could be 3 times or 5 times or more depending on the child. This innate ease of memorising words is not often the case for children with dyslexia.

### **Why using a multi-sensory approach is critical**

Children with dyslexia invariably have auditory (hearing) and/or visual (seeing) processing difficulties and may also have difficulty remembering what they have learnt. Because no two dyslexic people will ever be exactly alike, even from within the same family, it is important to find out the most effective way to teach your child to learn. You can determine this via trial and error, by exposing your child to a variety of activities, which utilise a range of senses. You could also refer to your child's diagnostic report to provide you with some insight as to how your child likes to learn.

**Multi-sensory** means teaching methods that engage different senses or as many of the senses as possible. These include visual, auditory and kinaesthetic/tactile stimulation, which is basically learning by seeing, hearing, saying, moving and feeling. You may see this referred to as 'VAK', which stands for Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic.

As adults we also have preferences, do you prefer to see new information (television, DVD, live performance), hear new information (audio CD, radio or MP3), read new information (book, newspapers, magazines, computer) or to do an exercise where you can learn by doing or feeling your

way through an activity. Like learning how to change a tyre by actually changing one. Which method enables you to remember the most of what you have learnt? Often using as many of our senses as possible in the learning process is advantageous. This is true for children too. Find out what works for your child.

Formal academic schooling does not favour the multi sensory method; particularly in the higher year levels as the workload increases and tasks become more difficult. School methods rely heavily on your child's auditory and visual processing skills; hearing teachers talk, following verbal instructions, taking notes and writing in books and during exams.

As a dyslexic who needs to learn reading via smaller steps, with more repetition and practise, using a multi sensory approach can make learning fun, more meaningful and more effective. Be creative and develop ways that suit your child's learning style and help them to remember.

### **23 Questions to help you determine where to start when teaching your child to read**

Depending on the age and communication skills of your child this can be relatively easy to find out or you may have to do some research. If you are a parent who hears your young child read every night you probably have a fair idea of what they know and don't know. If this is not possible here are some questions you can ask yourself, your child or your child's teacher.

Remember it doesn't matter how old your child is. A difficulty with reading usually comes down to a gap in learning. Finding that missing piece of the jigsaw puzzle can help all the other pieces fit together.

1. Does my child know the alphabet song?
2. Can my child recite the alphabet clearly?

3. Can my child point to random alphabet letter symbols and say the correct letter names?
4. Can my child identify the lower case letter symbols as well as the capital letters of the alphabet?

“Beware of font styles, there are so many and children can get confused Times New Roman looks completely different to Arial, which looks completely different to **CAPITALS**. Children are exposed to so many fonts and font sizes it can be very frustrating. Find out which font your school uses and get a copy of it, or find out which font your child prefers. This book is written in ‘Century Gothic’ because my dyslexic family members prefer it. Also be mindful of the size of text. Some children need larger fonts to be able to read accurately.”

5. Does my child understand that each letter of the alphabet represents a sound or sounds?
6. Can my child tell me the sounds of the letters in the alphabet?
7. Can my child hear a word and then tell me the beginning sound as in “dog” begins with “duh”
8. How many of the most frequently used words on the list does my child know instantly by sight? Schools generally have a sight word list they refer to or use the one in this eBook.
9. Can my child sound out simple words like m-a-t as “mmm - ahhh – tuh”?
10. Does my child know simple blends like ‘sh’ says “shhhhhh” or ‘th’ says “thhhhhh”?
11. Can my child say words and clap or tap words into their syllable parts pup/py or car/a/van?

12. Does my child understand the concept of rhyming words? Make up some silly sentences. Read them some rhymes. Ask them if they can hear the rhyming words. Can they repeat them to you? Can they point to the words that rhyme on the written page? Give them some examples of words that rhyme. Can they give you some back? Pop top stop -----?
13. When reading does my child gain meaning from the text? Check comprehension skills in two ways when you read to them and if they are capable readers, when they read to you. Ask questions like – “What was the boy’s name? Why was he sad? Did everything turn out O.K. at the end? How do you know? What would you do if that happened to you?”
14. Does my child read better in a quiet room?
15. Does my child read better in a certain light?
16. Does my child ever comment that words move around on the page or that white paper is too glary or flares over words? Please research Visual Dyslexia or Visual Perceptual/Visual Processing Problems if this is the case. You can ask your child –“Do the words ever play tricks on you?”
17. When my child comes to a word they don’t know do they attack it in an attempt to decode it and read it?
18. When my child comes to a word they don’t know how do they attack it? What methods do they use or strategies do they know? Write them down.
19. Does my child see punctuation marks and know what they are for?

20. How fast do they read – What is their rate of accuracy and fluency? Look for approximately 19 correct words out of 20 in a piece of text they know well. Time them. Talk to teachers about what their rate should be for their age.
21. How extensive is my child's spoken and reading vocabulary? Is there a difference between these two abilities?
22. If my child does read or pick up a book, what is my child interested in reading?
23. At what time of the day is my child at their best for reading, learning and taking in new information?

## How to teach your child to read - Language Arts 101

The most important rule you must know is **there are no rules**. Whatever works, is the method you should use and keep using as long as it is fun and effective. Be flexible with your choice of time to teach and method of teaching.

Formal learning is generally difficult for dyslexics. Some parents think school based teaching methods are the only way to go because that's all they know and that's what worked for them. More hours of sitting at a desk faced with books and pens after school. They subject their struggling children to hours of formal tutoring and their child gets sadder and sadder all the while thinking... "My parents think I'm completely stupid so I must be." I'm here to tell you learning can and should be fun. You can teach you child and if you feel you can't there are some great tutors out there. If you don't have the time, find someone else or source a method that works. Your investment will pay enormous dividends.

**Casey's story continued...**

Do you remember Casey from earlier in this book? She was learning her letter/sound relationships as her mum drew silly pictures. Well here is the end of that story....

Casey's dad came home from work. He saw what they were doing and grumbled. "What's all the noise? The neighbours will hear you. That's not teaching. Can't you just teach Casey the proper way, just say the letter and then the sound?" he demanded. "She's not a baby anymore". Casey looked up, her face dropped and her eyes filled with tears. She could not stand the persecution of her father's stare any longer and she fled from the room to sob on her bed. "Now, look what you've done", her mother said accusingly to her father. Casey put her pillow over her head to block out the sound of her Mum and Dad arguing again all because of her.

Spouses, partners, grandparents, teachers, friends and family can all sabotage your creative multi-sensory methods of teaching. Keep them informed of what you are doing and why you are doing it. Don't give up. Let the results speak for themselves.

*In order to be successful a child must feel success*

*To contribute to society a child must believe they have something worthwhile to give*

*To do what's right a child must be recognised for their effort*

*If all parents and schools gave these precious gifts to children the world would be a better place and perhaps our jails would be empty*

*Liz Dunoon*

## **The Magic of the English Language**

When you open the cover of a book you are entering a world of storytelling, adventure, information, high emotion, humour and entertainment. Your dyslexic child knows this and would like nothing more than to read effortlessly like those around them seem to.

My son would see me tucked up in bed at night reading a good book and would often say how he wished he could be like me. So I found a way to give him access to great books, which I will reveal to you shortly.

At teachers' college I was taught much about literacy and the English language. I did however, not learn to teach reading until I became a teacher in my own classroom with my own set of students.

### **Lisa's story**

I recall as a second year student teacher being placed for teaching experience in a Grade 2 class of 7 year olds. I was given the job of working one on one with a 7-year-old girl, Lisa who wasn't reading at all. I still remember trying to get her to recognise a word - any word on the page of her book. She just looked at me confused; I could see that she didn't want to disappoint me; she wanted to be able read. I had no idea what to do or even what to say. As an inexperienced student teacher, I reinforced her failure to learn to read. I wish I could rewind the clock knowing what I know now and apologise to her for my ignorance. I learnt to teach by experience and you can too.

### **Why you need to forget the school rules**

Remember there are no rules, give your child access to the English language in as many different formats as you can find. Immerse them in words, poetry, stories, songs, plays, musicals, and sets of instructions, shopping lists, maps, street directories, cookbooks, newspapers, magazines, films with sub-titles and advertising. Everything and anything you can think of that contains words. It's not just about reading. It's

about exposure to the English language in all its glorious forms. Make sure they can see, hear, read, touch, feel or move or all of the above to learn. Keep it short simple and fun. We don't want to add to their school homework, we want to increase our child's level of reading skill while they enjoy life.

### **You can teach your child to read - Here's how to do it**

Sometimes the best teaching does not take place in the classroom. I have given you suggestions of activities to teach reading that can take place almost anywhere - in the car, at the park, sitting at the kitchen bench, at Grandma's house, in the back yard, on the bus, snuggled up in bed. If you've got 10 minutes then that's enough. Don't allow limitations and your busy lifestyle to get in your way of helping and supporting your child. You can find time if you want to. Remember if your child is not into it and not engaging in your choice of activity – let it go and try again another day. You will eventually succeed and so will your child.

### **Ways to teach children the alphabet**

- If your child is a visual learner and is developing a good visual memory refrain from changing the form of the alphabet letters, putting them back to front or upside down and mixing up letters in words. You want them to be able to memorise letters and words in their correct form.
- Try to focus on the lowercase letters of the alphabet first and the capital letters second. Many commercially produced teaching aids like posters, exercise books and flash cards use only capital letters, not very helpful for someone getting ready to learn to read.
- Choose one font and stick with it. When they know the alphabet you can slowly introduce new fonts. Ask the school to give you a sample of the font they use to teach. You can even ask for a file of the school font to be sent to your computer via the Internet, and then you

can download it and use it to make up your own books and worksheets.

- The Alphabet Song is a great place to start. Every English speaking adult knows it and your child will not care how good your singing is. The more laughter the better – so start teaching them and sing together. There are also other good alphabet songs out there. While your child is singing get them to point to the alphabet letters.
- Get cut out wooden alphabet letters (lower case) and get them to hold them in their hands while they say the alphabet or sing it. Maybe you could get grandpa to cut some out to your patterns with his builder's jigsaw or buy some at a craft market.
- They can trace the letters onto cooking paper.
- Once I cut the whole lower case alphabet out of sandpaper and stuck it on to coloured backing paper, then I blue-tacked it onto the back of the kitchen bench at child height. I used a marker to put dots and arrows showing where the letters started so they could be traced with their little fingers in the correct direction. Every child who visited our house had a go. Children love tactile (touching) learning activities.
- Get your child to use highlighters to trace over letters.
- Write the letters onto bubble wrap and let them pop the bubbles as they form the letters
- Use non-permanent markers to trace or write them on a whiteboard.
- Write them with chalk on a blackboard or on the pavement. Use a paintbrush and some water to trace over them.

- Get them to write letters on your back so you can guess, then swap over.
- Get them to write the letters in the air. They can have their eyes open or shut. Try both.
- Bounce on the trampoline or jump over cracks in the pavement while they say the alphabet.
- Make up a poster and put it on the toilet or bathroom wall.
- Smear shaving cream on the kitchen table and get them to write the letters in it.
- Give them a highlighter and get them to circle letters from headlines in magazines and newspapers.
- Make the letters out of play dough or pastry and cook them.
- Make mud pies in the back yard and get them to write letters in mud on the fence, and then wash it off with the hose while watering the plants.
- Buy some bath pens and get them to write on the tiles around the bath.
- If a child can recognise a letter of the alphabet and say it's name correctly on numerous occasions, consider it learnt. Do not confuse the ability to write the letters of the alphabet with knowing the alphabet these are two different skills, both important, but they should be treated as such.

### **Ways to teach letter sounds and phonics**

It seems to be common for dyslexics to have difficulty hearing and processing the sounds of the letter symbols in

the English language. Focus on this skill, as it will help your dyslexic child enormously.

Understanding the relationship between letter symbols and the sounds they represent is a critical part of learning to read for everybody. Because this appears to be more difficult for many dyslexics, learning and remembering the sounds is therefore a very important step. You may need to teach phonics over a long period of time, allow your child to repeat past learning and practise to help them develop these skills.

- The alphabet song is useful, but does not give children effective pre-reading skills or teach them to hear letter sounds, so I wrote an even better song called quite simply "The Alphabet Sound Song". Go to the website [www.helpingchildrenwithdyslexia.com](http://www.helpingchildrenwithdyslexia.com) and download a free version of it. Save it and play it to your child every day. Learn it together as you point to the alphabet letter symbols. It teaches the most commonly used letter sounds of the English language and will give your child a stepping-stone to allow them to decode words when learning to read. You could create a variety of learning aids to go with this activity.
- Give your child a hand held mirror to look at their mouth while they say the alphabet sounds or sing the song. It is trickier than it appears for some children to get their mouths to form the correct shapes to make the sounds. Watching you do it and then watching their own mouths in the mirror can be a way to get it right.
- Ask you child to rest the backs of their fingers underneath their chin as they say letter sounds. This is a great tactile activity to encourage an appreciation of the subtle differences letter sounds can make.

- Make up a book of pictures from magazines that show images that all start with the same sound, (not the same letter).
- Find some books with simple rhymes, poems and rhyming stories. They are a great way to train young ears to hear sounds in words. Read aloud to them. Use expression. Find a CD and let them lie in bed at night and listen. Make up some actions or clap as you read them together. Developing awareness for rhyme and rhythm is an important part of understanding the sounds of letters and word parts. For example

*Peter Peter Pumpkin Eater  
Had a wife and couldn't keep her  
He put her in a pumpkin shell  
And there he kept her very well*

This rhyme highlights the “p” sound in words and the words that rhyme like ‘eater’ and ‘keep her’ and ‘shell’ and ‘well’. From my teaching experience children love words that are fun, rhyme and have rhythm. The sillier the better, because they make kids laugh. When your child says them with you they are starting the process of becoming a reader.

- Tongue twisters are difficult for some young children to say, but parents can say them until their children get the idea. Remember practise makes perfect. Have a go at saying them around the dinner table at night. Many highlight letter sound relationships. Two of my favourites are;

*She sells seashells by the seashore*

*Betty bought some butter - but the butter Betty bought  
was bitter butter so - Betty bought some better butter*

- Go to your local library and borrow some books that use limited numbers of words and words that can be sounded out easily. Dr Seuss wrote some great books like this and there are many others. Librarians are a great source of knowledge, so ask for their assistance. If you don't have access to a library you can always find books in second hand shops, ask your friends if you can borrow books or buy them over the Internet if your budget allows.
- Make up some two-letter word parts on a sheet of paper. For example ap, al, em, et, in, iv, ud, uk. Come up with a range of combinations with a vowel first and consonant second. Teach your child how to say the individual sounds and then join them together to make the word part. "ahhh", "puhh" becomes "ap". Start with only a few examples and then build up to more and more. Initially you can say them first and they can repeat after you.

It is important to use only short vowels sounds like

ap as in 'map'

al as in 'pal'

em as in 'hem'

et as in 'wet'

in as in 'pin'

iv as in 'give'

ud as in 'bud' and

uk as in 'yuk'.

There are many combinations. Avoid two letter words that use the long vowel sounds like 'do' or 'to' for this exercise, as it can be confusing. You can progress to a whole page of two letter word parts and then increase the challenge by timing accurate responses to the reading of the short word parts as a brain training fluency exercise. This exercise may take a few goes, but

keep it short and simple. You can then progress to the next exercise.

- Choose some familiar 2 letter and 3 letter words like dog, cat, man, top, in, get, wet. Show your child verbally how to pull them apart into sounds like “duhh-ohhh-guhhh” for dog. See if they can do it too. Make a note of how many sounds (phonemes) they can hear in each word. They can clap or tap to show you or indicate the number of sounds they can hear by handing you the appropriate number of blocks or buttons. Once your child understands that spoken words can be pulled apart into smaller sound parts they are well on the way to identifying the link between spoken words and learning to read. Practise this skill while involving a range of senses. Children love to move and learn and be rewarded for their effort.
- Now it is time to apply this knowledge to written words. Again choose simple 2 or 3 letter words and write them down on a piece of paper. You can draw a picture next to them if you like. Demonstrate to your child how you can read them by applying the same sound knowledge to them “cuhh - ahhh – tuh” for cat. Make sure they are successful. Choose words that are meaningful and repeat words from previous sessions.

This is the second part of breaking the reading code, understanding that letters in words when reading represent sounds in spoken language. When trying to decode words using this method it is very important for children to say the words out loud as they are trying to read them. To hear the sound parts or phonemes is a very important part of the reading process as it uses both auditory skills and visual skills.

Parents can constantly demonstrate this sounding out loud technique. Older children sometimes feel babyish doing this, but if you do it too it will become more

acceptable to them. Even now when I read a newspaper or a book to my children, if I come to a tricky word I will demonstrate how to sound it out to decode it. Adults all do this; they just tend to do it silently in their head. Your child needs to see you attacking words too.

- You can increase the difficulty of words as you go, start to include words with consonant and vowel blends. For example 4 letter words like;

went – “wuh - ehh – nnn – tuh”

cook – “cuh- ooh – kuh”

peel – “puh- eeh – ll”

cake – “cuh – ay - kuh”

corn – “cuh – orr – nnn”

Then go on to 5 letter words like;

sound – “sss – oow – nnn – duh”

bread – “buh – rrr - ehh – duh”

soccer – “sss - ohh- cuh – err”

church – chh – err – ch”

spoon – “sss – puh – ooo – nnn”

Your child will soon begin to understand that blends of letters like ‘oo’ and ‘ch’, can make up one unit of sound in a word. You can allow for further practise by practising with word lists that have similar spelling patterns.

### **Keep exposing your child to books the whole time**

Make sure you are reading to your child as often as you can, daily if possible. I know this is time consuming and may seem impossible, especially when you have more than one child and we all work long hours, but I encourage you to do it. For my children it’s not about being read to as much as it is about spending quality, close and personal time with me. Sometimes it is the only time in the day they get my

undivided personal attention Develop a routine that allows you to fit in 10 minutes of reading a night. My children always seem to fall asleep easily and happily after I have read to them. On the days when I run out of time, patience and steam, I use an audio book. These are available from your local library or you can even borrow them over the Internet. Childhood is such a short time in a person's life so turn off the TV, snuggle up and get reading.

- Do you remember my son who was feeling sad because he could not lie in bed at night and enjoy a good book? I overcame this problem for him by seeking out books, which were appropriate for his age and interest level and sourced an accompanying audio CD. Luckily my local library has a huge supply of them. At first he had trouble keeping up with the speed of the actor reading on the CD and we used a ruler to guide his eyes and assist him. Over time his fluency rate increased and he is now reading much faster. He has to work at it, but he can keep up with the CDs. This increase in fluency has transferred into his everyday reading by increasing his spoken, written and reading vocabulary and his reading speed. He also enjoys the contents of the books and I often get a full oral book report if he feels it was a good choice.

### **Why your child needs to understand syllables**

Syllables are the largest units of sound that make up a word. Don't be confused by letter sounds or phonics. Syllables are more about the spoken rhythm in words. They provide a great platform to enable your child to break down words into parts for reading writing and spelling. Syllables are also important because they can help your child to overcome their fear of reading aloud in front of other people.

- Hearing syllables is the best place to start. The first thing I tell children is that big long words very quickly become

a series of little short words when you break them down into syllables.

carpet becomes car – pet

dentist becomes den-tist

cricket becomes crick-et

important becomes im – por – tant.

especially becomes es – pesh - al – ly

fortunate becomes for – tu – nate

caravan becomes car – a - van

Much easier to read and spell.

“You can see here that each syllable has a vowel or vowel sound as indicated earlier. This is important knowledge for a child learning word attack and reading skills. Knowing the short and long vowel sounds of each vowel increases their ability further to decode unknown words.”

- Clapping or tapping is the best way to learn to hear the syllable rhythm of words. Do this with words, like the names of the children in your family and your child's class. Then do it with other words that are meaningful to your child. Rhymes they are familiar with or chants are also good. The more you do this activity the better, it is a major link between speaking, reading and spelling as children hear and recognise the sound parts in words.
- Singing is a wonderful way to expose children to the break down of syllables in words. Many song sheets often break down words into syllables because it makes it easier to sing a song accurately with the right note. All songs are good, but slow songs are even better. If your child has a favourite song, which they know well. Maybe the Wiggles or the latest video hit. Type up the words on the computer or you may be able to use an Internet search engine to source them and download them. When typing them, put the syllable breaks in with a hyphen.

For bigger kids I am a big fan of karaoke DVD's, Play Station's Sing Star and CD's that include the lyrics inside the front cover. The key is to find a song that your child loves so much they want to know how to sing the words. This can lead to a great reading and fluency activity. This is a good in the car activity too.

- Syllable parts make long words seem more easily accessible to your child when reading. Using hyphens or colour coding syllables when writing words is often a great way to give your child the confidence to read aloud in front of others if they have a special oral presentation to give. It is also a great way to remember the break down of words for spelling tests.
- Compound words are great two syllable words to learn to read. They are fun to pull apart because they are made of two complete smaller words. For example:

hairbrush is hair + brush  
highchair is high + chair  
staircase is stair + case

You can write these word parts out and then have fun pulling them apart and joining them back together.

### **How to teach your children to read and remember the most commonly used words.**

- Learning the most commonly used word list is a great way to assist your child to learn to read. Your school can provide you with their list or you will find a good word list in this eBook. Many of these words must be memorised as most are impossible to sound out. Start with just a few of them. It is about quality of learning not quantity. They are an important part of learning to read as they make up approximately 25% of all words that appear in print.

- A way that is often employed by learning support teachers to teach the most commonly used words is a flashcard method. Most of these words can't be sounded out and you want your child to be able to recognise them instantaneously by sight. Start at the top of the list and choose 5 – 10 of them depending on age and skill level of your child. Print or write the words in lower case letters on to rectangular pieces of card or flash cards and keep them inside a labelled envelope.

Help your child to practise them one by one, by reading them aloud over and over. You should also put them into sentences for them orally to give them meaning. Ask them to shut their eyes and visualise them. Write them with their finger in the air. Write them all over the house in a variety of mediums. Play memory, bingo and dominos with them. Get your child to jump on the trampoline or climb a tree while you hold them up. They can practise writing them or if that's too hard, get them to trace them - whatever works, be creative.

- Now you can test their memory. If your child can recognise the word on sight (give them a few seconds), put a smiley face stamp or a tick on the back of the card. If your child can do this on 5 consecutive days securing 5 reward marks then consider the word learnt. Put the word into a new envelope of words, titled "Words I Know". Replace these learnt words with new words, working your way through the list. Try to aim at having 5 -10 words to learn at any given time.

It is important to go back and practise previously learnt words to ensure they remain easily accessible from your child's long term working memory.

- Do not scramble letters of words. This only causes confusion in your child's mind when they are

attempting to remember them, especially if your child is a visual learner.

### **A Tiny Spark**

A tiny spark  
A flicker of recognition  
A hint of a smile  
You know it made sense  
You know you got through  
A rainbow is forming

### **Teaching your child to gain meaning when reading**

- The most meaningful book your child will ever read is a book about themselves. The first book my oldest son ever read confidently was a book I made for him. He was 6 years old and not reading at all. I collected some writing paper from the school, made up some picture windows and stapled it together. I wrote the words for him and he drew an accompanying picture. The front of the book featured a photo of him at school on Crazy Hair Day.

The first page read. **I am Leo. Here I am. I can read.**

Second page. **I can play soccer. Can you see me?**

Third page. **This is Casey. She is my sister.**

Fourth page. **This is my house.**

And so on. You can see how I have used words from the most commonly used sight word list. Leo loved this book because he could read every word in it. He didn't know any rules of spelling or grammar or punctuation, but he committed every word to memory because this was 'his' book. I made similar books using family photos

from my digital photo library featuring family holidays and birthdays. Even though my children are older now. These books still have pride of place on the bookshelf and are still regularly read, because my children are the stars of the story.

- Use giant books to model the correct way to read to your child. These are often available from schools or the local library. You can be the teacher first and your child can be the student. Use expression and demonstrate the correct pronunciation of words and use of punctuation marks. Next swap over and allow your child to be the teacher as they point to the words and read the story. Vary your child's audience for further practise. It might be Grandma, a friend or a recording device, which they can then play back.
- The more a child reads at home or is engaged in reading activities with their parents the more good reading habits are being developed. If your child develops the skill of being an active listener while you read stories. Then they are well on their way to developing the cognitive skills to becoming capable of gaining meaning from the text. They are also increasing their vocabulary. Not all parents consider themselves to be capable readers. Your child will not be bothered about this as much as you the parent will be. Read slowly and with lots of expression. Your child will love you for it. Maybe you can develop better reading skills together. Remember by overcoming your fear of failing and having a go, you are teaching your child a vital life skill to help them to take a risk and have a go.
- When you are sharing books with your child use this as a time to discuss elements of the story. You can do this even before you begin to read. Discuss, title, front cover illustration, scan through the book and look at any pictures or main characters, chapter headings, make a prediction as to what the story is about.

- While you are reading constantly check that your child is into the story. If they are not, choose a new book or try again at another time or on another day. Do not always assume if they are wriggling and looking away they are not listening. My middle son is a wriggle bug. I often assume he has lost track of a story I am reading, but when I check he always seems to know where I'm up to. It's his favourite trick as he proves to me he is actually listening with a big grin on his face. He just likes to move. You do need to keep an eye on this though. When you are reading, stop every now and again and check if they are aware of the story. Ask questions or make comments and see if you get a response. Good questions are. "What words did I just read? Can you tell me what just happened in the story"? Or "What do you think will happen next?"

If your child is doing the reading and they are struggling over difficult words, when they get to the end of the sentence or page, quickly reread it for them again to ensure the story's momentum and meaning is maintained.

- Reading for meaning has got to be fun and enjoyable. A good reader reads purely for enjoyment and you need to provide your struggling reader with access to this experience. To do this you can read for them if the book is difficult or they are too tired. My daughter loves this one and will read confidently along with me. Apply the 'Golden Rule' – If they come across a word they don't know they are allowed to tap you and you will immediately say the word to maintain the flow of the story. You can try reading a word each, a sentence each, a paragraph each or a page each. This shared reading activity gives them time to rest. You can model good reading skills and give them access to some of the more difficult words. Taking turns to read also allows

you to emphasize the use of punctuation marks and the story structure.

- In most classrooms there are reading trends and children may be competing to secure books from a particular range from the school library. Your child may feel left out because they believe they will never be able to read these books. You need to try and stick to books that are appropriate for your child's intellectual level. If all the kids are reading chapter books in your child's class then your child should have access to them too. Speak to your child's teacher or school librarian and find out if children are favouring particular books. At one stage in my boy's classrooms it was 'Zac Power' Books by H.I. Larry, at another time it was the 'Boys Rule' series by Felice Arena and Phil Kettle. The added advantage of using books from a series that is popular is your child will be highly motivated to have a go. By helping them to be successful and operate at the same reading level as their peers you are giving them a huge confidence boost.

“Your child will never learn to read  
unless they believe they can.  
Your support is critical in the early stages”

- Get your child a library card as soon as you can, become frequent visitors and borrow. Libraries today are not what they used to be; they are fascinating places even for the not so keen reader. Make a visit and you will be amazed. Pick up a brochure and take a note of all the services they offer. How will this encourage your child's comprehension, I hear you ask? Well, your child needs to be able to choose books for themselves. Even if they can't read them this is an opportunity to actively select their own reading

material. This can include cartoons, comics, magazines, fiction and non fiction books. It doesn't matter what they read as long as they are reading or having a go. By empowering your child you can make them more motivated to learn to read and gain meaning from books because they are interested in a particular topic.

- I have seen many children who can read fluently and effortlessly, but not for meaning. I have been impressed and amazed by children reading high level books for their age, until I start asking questions at the finish of the book. It doesn't take long to realise that none, absolutely none, of what they read went in. Their eyes see the words, the brains memory bank accurately identifies them and the words fly out of their mouths one after the other, but no meaningful thought process was attached. By generating questions you can engage a young mind to help readers read for meaning. Think of questions that begin with - who, what, where, when and why. Relate the story to their life experience. In discussion, clarify difficult words, illustrate or note the main story points or sequence of events and retell the story at the end. Never assume a capable, fluent reader is reading for meaning and taking in what they read. It is always important to check on comprehension even for seemingly good readers.

## **Teaching the rules of words in the English language**

The English language is so full of rules - it seems there is just about a rule for everything. As your child begins to increase their reading skill having a general knowledge of these rules will help to give them the tools to further understanding the structure of words, when decoding to read. Don't get bogged down by rules though.

It is important however, to consider timing when teaching rules. I emphasise certain rules when my daughter is practising her reading, because then it makes her attempts at attacking tricky words more meaningful. Over time she begins to see patterns in words that are similar in structure. Teaching rules in isolation is not as effective. Remember to be creative in your teaching of them and use multi-sensory methods. To keep it simple, I am only going to list a few rules, that are common and easy to apply. They will provide your child with some basic decoding tools.

“The other important thing you need to tell your child is that there seems to be exceptions to every rule in the English language. Some words simply do not follow the rules. This fact can make learning to read frustrating and difficult for the struggling dyslexic reader.”

- **The silent ‘e’ rule** These are words where there is a vowel followed by a consonant and then a final ‘e’, which makes the vowel say its own alphabet name. Examples are:

Tim – time  
hat – hate  
hop – hope  
win – wine  
slim - slime

- **The soft ‘c’ rule** When the letter ‘c’ is followed by the letters ‘e’, ‘i’ or ‘y’ it is pronounced as an “ssss” sound. For example:

Cinderella  
cellar  
cent  
cylinder  
bicycle

city  
resilience  
receive

- **The hard 'g', soft 'g' rules** When 'g' is followed by an 'e', an 'i' or a 'y' it usually makes a *soft* sound. For example:

gently	giant	gymnastics
gem	giraffe	gypsy
gelatine	ginger	gyrate

Of course there are exceptions to all rules in the English language consider – '*get, girl, together, gift, give, gelding, giddy*' – and there are lots more. It is a good idea to suggest to children they try both 'g' sounds when attacking or spelling an unknown word.

When 'g' is followed by an 'a', an 'o' or a 'u' it usually makes a *hard* sound. For example:

gate	got	gut
garter	goat	gum-boot
garbage	God	gun

- **Two consonants with a vowel either side rule** In words where there is a vowel followed by two consonants and then another vowel, you can divide the consonants down the middle. This is also a way your child can tell if the consonant in the centre of words needs to be doubled. If they are unsure whether 'hopped' has one 'p' or two, they can see whether there are vowels on each side of the middle consonant and double it if there are.

Examples are:

happen – hap – pen  
possum – pos – sum  
rabbit – rab – bit  
hopping – hop – ping

wrapping – wrap - ping  
putting – put – ting

Again there are exceptions see the extra rule below

➤ **When to use double or singles consonants?**

If the first vowel 'a' makes its shorts sound 'ahh' use a double consonant. If it makes its alphabet name or long sound 'ay' use a single consonant.

tapping – I was tapping on the wall to annoy my brother.

taping – He was taping his ankle because he was injured at cricket training.

➤ **When 'y' sounds like a 'e' or an 'i'**

When 'y' is used on the end of words it will make the alphabet name of either 'e' or 'i'.

Examples are:

try  
happy  
by  
tiny  
funny  
shy  
money

➤ **When a word ends in 'y' and you want to make it plural**

Remove the 'y' and add 'ies'

Examples are:

baby – babies  
ruby – rubies  
body – bodies  
poppy – poppies  
patty – patties  
ferry - ferries

➤ **When you add 'ing' to a word that ends in an 'e'**

Drop the 'e' and add 'ing'

Examples are:

come – coming

hope – hoping

believe - believing

rave – raving

recognise – recognising

describe – describing

➤ **When two vowels go walking the first one does the talking.**

This applies when the 'e', 'a' or 'o' makes its alphabet name or the long 'ee' 'ay' or 'ohh' sound.

For example:

read

toast

meat

teach

brain

heal

dream

Here are some exceptions where both vowels are sounded; Leo, diet, trial, being, Australia.

There are some exceptions where is doesn't work at all.

Check out the underlined words in these sentences for example. Very tricky!

➤ **'i' before 'e' except after 'c' when you hear the long 'ee' sound**

For example:

niece

piece

receive

believe

Exceptions are when you hear an 'ay' sound then the word is spelt with the 'e' first as in 'weight' and 'neighbour'

### **Rules Rules Rules**

There are hundreds of rules in the English language. Again if I were to include them all you would fall asleep reading this book. I find the best way to explore them is progressively as your child's word knowledge increases. Words where spelling rules do apply can become a topic of discussion, as can words where certain rules are broken.

The more exposure your child has to the written word the more skilled they will become at understanding spelling rules and where to apply them. Words that do follow spelling rules can be listed in word families and attempts can be made to teach your child to memorise them. This is similar to the way you would teach your child to memorise sight words. It is not until a child reads or attempts to spell when writing that their memory of the rules that apply to certain words will be revealed.

As a teacher it is important to recognise the difficulty of learning to read and spell words in the English language as spelling inconsistencies are revealed. It is also important to allow your child the opportunity to voice their frustration with this as they work hard to learn to read and spell accurately. It won't change anything, but it will help them to feel better as they realise learning to read English is not an exact science.

### **Teaching your child the importance of root words and affixes**

- **Prefixes** By understanding the meaning of prefixes children will be privy to further decoding strategies when reading. Prefixes are a small but meaningful word part, which is placed at the beginning of a word to change meaning. For example:

'dis' (meaning not) – disappear, disappoint, disobey  
'un' (meaning not) – unaware, unavailable, unable  
'im' (meaning not) - impossible, impatient, imperfect  
'in' (meaning not) – incomplete, invisible, inconvenient  
'mis' (meaning bad)- misbehave, misjudge, misfortune  
're' (meaning again) – recur, rearrange, rename

- **Suffixes** Suffixes are similar to prefixes, but appear at the end of a word instead of the beginning. For example:

'ly' (meaning recurring/resembling) – hourly, slowly  
'less' (meaning without) – clueless, painless, careless  
'ful' (meaning full of) – colourful, helpful, forgetful  
'ness' (meaning state of)- darkness, happiness, sadness  
'able' (meaning is, can be) – agreeable, moveable  
'ment' (meaning 'action/process) – entertainment, excitement, movement

- **Affixes** Together prefixes and suffixes are known as affixes.
- **Root words** The word that is central to the affix is the base or root word. The following words have a prefix a root word and a suffix

unbelievable or un-believe-able (note the 'e' is gone after the 'v'  
disappointment or dis-apoint-ment  
imperfection or im-perfect-ion

Knowing how these words are constructed will help to give your child the knowledge and the confidence to decode them more easily.

## Contractions.

Contractions are words made from two longer words with some letters missing and then replaced with an apostrophe. Contractions are a reflection of the way we shorten words when we speak and can also create homophones, words that sound the same but have different meanings. See some examples below.

he has - becomes - **he's**  
it is - becomes - **it's**  
we will - becomes - **we'll**  
what is - becomes - **what's**  
you are - becomes - **you're**

The best way to teach contractions is by saying them aloud and using them in a sentence. We tend to use them everyday when we speak so it is not hard to find good examples.

## Reading for expressions and recognising punctuation marks

Many children with dyslexia, who are struggling to read, often don't read with expression or take note of the punctuation marks, reading straight through them in a monotone voice. In their effort just to decode words their inattention to detail means the little marks on the page get missed. There are ways to encourage children to recognise these visual cues when the time is right.

- When you read to your child demonstrate reading with expression and follow the punctuation marks.
- Take it in turns to read sentences in a book so your child looks to see whose turn it is to read when you arrive at a full stop. While doing this you can also model the use of expression and as their confidence begins to grow they will copy you. It is also a fun shared activity.

- Start small and give your child permission to make a noise or do an action every time they see a full stop. This will make them stop and celebrate every full stop. As a progression choose a different signal for commas and so on.
- Take on the character voice of the speaker in the story every time you see a question appear in the text. This accentuates the use of question marks. You can do the same for talking marks.
- Go to town with exclamation marks. When you see one repeat the exclamation your child will love to hear you 'exclaiming' and they will soon learn what they are for as they giggle at your efforts.
- Reading plays with your child is a great way to emphasise the use of punctuation marks.

My daughter has recently become very aware of punctuation marks and will say the name of every mark every time she sees one in her book. It has become part of the reading process and is just another stage of her development as she learns to read.

**Here is a NEW method for teaching your child to read faster and track their rate of success that teachers don't even know about**

Many literacy experts believe that the development of fluency skills is critical to train the dyslexic brain to read more like a non-dyslexic brain. Once your child is starting to read it is important to develop their rate of fluency with fluency training. This is the speed at which they read with relative accuracy, while gaining meaning from the text. This is a brain training skill and as for any skill we learn and excel at it needs to be practised regularly in order improve.

“Brain Training is based on the scientifically proven premise that neurones that repeatedly fire together, wire together making learning permanent.”

Hearing your children read familiar texts aloud regularly in a supportive environment is the key to increasing their rate of fluency. To read fluently the brain needs to respond automatically to the words on the page of the text. The child with dyslexia can often achieve this through the process of over learning. This is a similar method to the way Olympic athletes train for an event. When your child runs down the soccer field dribbling the ball or shoots the perfect goal on the netball court, they do so because they have practised time and time again. The same philosophy needs to be applied to oral reading fluency. Oral reading, where your child reads to you aloud is the key because this reinforces visual and audio neural pathways within your child's brain.

If your child is one of those students who finds they just can't keep up when reading in class, because everyone else is already finished when they are only half way through the selected text. Be assured that fluency training can help them to improve their reading skills and reading rates. Follow these simple instructions.

- Try to practise for fluency every day, every month of every year for approximately 10 minutes remember you are training the brain. Day after day gets the best results.
- Carefully choose a piece of text or a list of words or a combination of both, that is easy for your child to read. There should be no more than around one error for every twenty words or so. Sometimes I even include numbers for an added variation. Make it easy, achievable and rewarding. Use the same speed training exercise 5 times in a row. This will help the words within the text to become ingrained in their brain's

automatic word form system. It will also help them to end up in their long-term memory for future reference and recall. For examples of speed training worksheets you can go to the free resources area of the website [www.HelpingChildrenWithDyslexia.com](http://www.HelpingChildrenWithDyslexia.com) or make up your own based on your knowledge of your child, their interests and their needs.

- Build in some incentives, use a stopwatch and time their results. Create a simple graph to monitor their improvements. They will love seeing you get the ruler out to graph their daily improvement at each session. You will also find a free worksheet to graph your child's speed training results on the website [www.HelpingChildrenWithDyslexia.com](http://www.HelpingChildrenWithDyslexia.com).
- It is important for children to complete this activity in a private setting without distractions and to only compete against themselves. It's about 'their' reading, not how they compare to others. They will not do so well with an audience. You will be surprised how much your child will enjoy this activity. It is over and done with, in about 10 minutes; they will experience success and see their progress before their own eyes.

*"I urge parents of dyslexic children to make fluency training-repeated oral reading – their number one priority. There are very few activities for a dyslexic reader that provide as much improvement for the amount of time spent as does guided repeated oral reading."*

**Professor Sally Shaywitz**

Co-Director of the Yale Centre for the Study of Learning and Attention and author of 'Overcoming Dyslexia'

- You can do fluency training with a list of words your child is learning. Put a minute on a timer and see how

many words they can read aloud from flashcards or a word list before the time runs out. Do this day after day and see their automatic response rates improve.

- Poems and rhymes are also good material for this fluency exercise.
- Practising dramatic plays over and over again are also good.
- Song lyrics are good material too.
- Read a new piece of text to your child and then get them to read it back to you. Repeat this exercise until they know it well.
- You can support this fluency training by encouraging them to use audio CD books or downloadable audio books to improve fluency rates as they read the actual book. Afterwards get them to have go at reading the book aloud without the audio, while you listen and assist them.
- To get an idea of how fast your child should be reading and how your child's school measures fluency rates it is best to speak to your child's teacher or learning support teacher to see what the expectation is for your child's age level.

### **Authors story**

As a parent of a child who always struggled with reading I have found speed training to be hugely successful. After 5 weeks of speed training my son's teacher grabbed my arm as I was walking through the school one day. She looked at me excitedly. "What have you done she said? You've done something. Leo's reading has improved. He easily passed his multiplication tables test this morning and he even went to our classroom library and chose a book to read for pleasure.

It's amazing. Tell me what you have done"? I was speechless all I had done was introduce ten minutes of speed training every evening after school. I told her how it worked and she was amazed. "Keep doing it she said. It's working."

### **Don't feel overwhelmed**

At the end of reading this chapter you may be starting to think there is too much information and it is going to be too time consuming and too hard to help your child to learn to read. Don't allow the thought of teaching your child to read become a task so frightening that you do not feel you can do it; remember to keep it in perspective. Start small and have go, don't try to do everything at once. Doing something however small is better than doing nothing. You can do this. There are many other parents in exactly the same position as you, including me and I'm just an ordinary parent like you - if I can do it - you can too.

Also remember that learning to read is a complex task. According to dyslexia expert, Professor John Stein, it is one of the hardest tasks our brains will ever accomplish. From my teaching experience children seem to experience reading success in little leaps and bounds rather than at a steady rate. It is as if one day something just clicks and they can do something easily that they could not do yesterday. It is in these little leaps forward that some reading magic has occurred.

### **21 tips to make your child want to practice their reading**

Hearing your child read should be an enjoyable experience. If you find it is a constant battlefield of tears, tantrums and despair and you and your child both dread it, it is time to turn this around. To start with just put the emphasis on hearing your child practising their reading. Don't focus on teaching them to read, while they practise. Many parents end up doing just this and this is where the drama begins. It is your job to build little bridges of support to ensure their attempts

at reading are successful regardless of their ability. Here are some tips to help make it fun for everyone.

1. Your child should be able to read their reader with a reasonable degree of success. If they can't, read it to them first and then let them have a go or read it together. If it is still far too difficult put it to one side and choose a book from your own bookshelf. Give your child's teacher some feedback and let them know it was too difficult.
2. Try to create a routine of appropriate times to hear your child read. Children like life to be predictable and it pays dividends to be organised.
3. At the end of every second page of simple pictorial readers for younger children or every second paragraph in chapter books for older children, praise them. Tell them how well they are doing and how impressed you are. Children love praise and recognition for their effort.
4. If you are constantly being sent home books that are inappropriate, make a time to go to school. Ask the teacher to choose a selection of readers for your child or choose them yourself. Often this means choosing readers with words that can be easily sounded out using the phonics method. There are sets of readers that are produced that are sequential in nature and build phonic and word knowledge. Ask your child's teacher for access to these types of readers.
5. Do not have unreasonable expectations of your child. This is a common problem for

parents who are capable and competent readers. Do not make negative or sarcastic comments even in jest. Your child did not set out to struggle to learn to read. Be insightful, take the time to study your child, watch their facial expressions and learn from them.

While your child concentrates on the book you concentrate on them. If you do this you will see how hard they are trying and you will begin to understand exactly what they need from you by way of support.

6. Choose a time of the day when your child is not mentally exhausted. If they are then find another time or read the reader to them instead, there is always tomorrow.
7. Get your child to practise their reading in a quiet environment with appropriate lighting and limited distractions. (No TV or yelling brothers or sisters).
8. Get your child to point to the words as they read them this can aid their tracking skills. A short ruler can also help children keep on track. A reading ruler, which is a piece of card with a rectangular window cut out which allows them to see only a limited amount of text at any one time can also be helpful.
9. If your child comes to a word they don't know get them to apply the 'golden rule' where they can tap you and you will read the word instantly for them. Make a mental note of the words that tripped them up for your future reference. This method encourages fluency and allows them to keep track of the storyline

of the book. Remember reading must be fun and rewarding or they won't want to do it.

10. Always appear to be eager and happy to hear them read, don't sigh, look impatient, look away, watch TV, carry on a conversation with someone else, talk on the phone or stare at your watch. Whether you realise it or not your child is using a huge amount of brainpower to read aloud to you, you need to respect their efforts.
11. Remember to check their comprehension, by asking questions.
12. As their reading confidence increases so will their fluency and their ability to attack unknown words. You can encourage them to do this when you feel they are ready by teaching them to use the following strategies. Try to teach these in the context of their reading practice. Don't stop their reading session to engage in a long reading lesson or lecture.
13. Use any pictures on the page to help work the unknown word out.
14. Look for any little words in the big unknown word.
15. Use the story so far to predict what the unknown word might be.
16. Look at the first letter and the last letter of the word does this help? Say the sounds they make.

17. Look at the first 3 letters of the unknown word. Get them to sound them out, does this give them a clue?
18. Have a go at sounding out the whole unknown word - can it be decoded this way? Get them to sound it out a few times. Sometimes they will eventually get to the right word. Using the vowel/syllable relationship can also be use ful here.
19. Read what comes after the word does this help to reveal it?
20. Forget about the unknown word and keep going. This is better than hitting a roadblock where your child is reluctant to read any further.
21. When they finish their reader congratulate them on their effort and thank them for reading to you.

When you child is learning to read, rarely ever is it a smooth upward progression of increased reading skill and capability. Some days and weeks you will feel like they are not making progress at all and then one day they will pick up a book and start reading words they have never read easily before as if by magic. Then you will understand the power of your support and watch their faces shine with delight because they can now read. You did it. Your child is reading with confidence.

All this and more awaits you. I wish you every success.

### **Computer and Internet programs for teaching reading**

You will notice I have left out any reference to reading programs or computer programs that teach reading skills. I did this intentionally to demonstrate to you that teaching

your child to read does not have to cost you money. There are of course many fantastic programs, many free which can supplement your teaching methods. You can find a huge list of them in the free resources pages, which can be found on the website [www.HelpingChildrenWithDyslexia.com](http://www.HelpingChildrenWithDyslexia.com) I will continually add to this resources list as more programs become available.

**We wish you well. Your child's journey to a happier more successful place has just begun.**

## About the Author



Liz Dunoon is a teacher and a mother to three children all with dyslexia. It was through her own research to help her children that she discovered a huge divide between what is known by researchers about dyslexia and what is happening to support children with dyslexia in our schools today.

Liz wrote this book as a response to the many parents who are seeking solutions to their child's struggle with reading. She believes all children can learn to read and the process is the same for all individuals whether they have dyslexia or not.

The difference is that children with dyslexia need to have their processing deficits and their learning strengths identified, as this will provide the key to effective teaching strategies, telling parents how their child can achieve learning success. Children with dyslexia invariably need smaller learning steps, more practice and more repetition to remember what they have learnt.

Children with dyslexia often struggle to keep up with their peers in the school classroom. This inability to keep up means gaps can appear in a child's understanding of the reading process, making it harder for them to make progress. It is for this reason that parents are vital, because they can advocate on behalf of their children and offer this extra assistance. This book will show you how to teach your child to read from home.

### **Liz Dunoon has also written:**

#### ***Helping Children With Dyslexia***

21 Super Strategies To Ensure Your Child's Success At School.

#### **EBooks**

**Guide for Teaching** Your Dyslexic Child To **Write and Spell** From Home

**Guide for teaching** Your Dyslexic Child To **Do math** From Home

Available from the website [www.HelpingChildrenWithDyslexia.com](http://www.HelpingChildrenWithDyslexia.com)