



Promoting literacy through research, education, and advocacy.

Hawai'i Branch - HIDA

Tips for Parents and Families of Children with Dyslexia

HIDA's MISSION IS TO

Increase awareness of dyslexia in our community, provide support for dyslexics, families and educators, promote teacher training, and improve literacy for struggling readers.



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Tips for Parents and Families of Children with Dyslexia

This is a list of practical tips from HIDA members. Please note that these tips supplement - not replace - Structured Literacy instruction and procedures to teach children with dyslexia to read. Also, please remember the list is an "a la carte" menu - you can pick and choose things to try. Not every suggestion is necessary or appropriate for every child. HIDA hopes that sharing ideas will help parents and teachers assist their children with dyslexia.

Note: To avoid the awkward "his or her", the masculine and feminine pronouns have been used interchangeably throughout this booklet.

*Every child is different.
Explore **possibilities**.*

1. Encourage All Kinds of Reading

- a. Encourage the reading of all kinds of materials, including a variety of difficulty levels and topics (e.g., comic books, graphic novels, subtitles in Japanese cartoons, sports or car magazines, tabloids, etc.).
- b. Choose books for your child to read to herself that are below her reading or age level. This helps build confidence and allows her to enjoy reading. However, read books to your child that are higher than her grade level. Look in the back of the book for the grade level.
- c. Read books by Dr. Seuss. Children with dyslexia have difficulty with rhyming words.

2. Audio Books

- a. Encourage your child to listen to audio books for pleasure.
- b. Have your child read along while listening to an audio book.
- c. Choose audio books for your child that are higher than his reading level.
- d. Load audio books on his iPod.
- e. Listen to audio books together in the car on commutes and family vacations.
- f. Have your child listen to audio book versions of assigned school books during the preceding summer.
- g. Join Bookshare at www.bookshare.org (for scanned books-including certain textbooks).
- h. Join Learning Ally (formerly Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic) at www.learningally.org (for recorded books-including certain textbooks).

- i. Join the Hawai'i Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. (402 Kapahulu Avenue, Honolulu, HI 96815; phone 733-8444), where you can borrow books on tape and the required tape players for free.
- j. Download audio books from the Hawai'i State Public Library at www.hawaii.sdp.sirsi.net
- k. Download free public domain audio books from the following websites:
 - i. www.booksshouldbefree.com
 - ii. www.librophile.com
 - iii. www.voicesinthedark.com
 - iv. www.librivox.org
 - v. www.openculture.com
 - vi. www.audiobooksforfree.com
 - vii. www.freeclassicaudiobooks.com
 - viii. www.audiobooks.org
 - ix. www.learnoutloud.com
- l. Request college textbooks in accessible format through AccessText (www.accesstext.org).

3. Reading Tips

- a. Have your child read aloud to herself.
- b. Put a ruler or bookmark under text, or use a clear ruler with a "reading window," to follow the lines of type when reading.
- c. Highlight every other line of text to follow the lines of type when reading.
- d. Read aloud to your child and point to the words as you read to her. Have your child follow the movement of your finger.
- e. Have two copies of the book so you can read side-by-side with your child.

*It is not cheating to use
spell check or a calculator*

4. It is not a really big deal if your child cannot:

- a. erase pencil markings cleanly and completely
- b. use scissors
- c. color inside the lines
- d. proofread his papers efficiently
- e. spell consistently

Children with dyslexia often have difficulty with these tasks which, while seemingly important in school, may have far less significance for them in the "real world." Remember, spelling and good handwriting are not moral virtues.

5. It is not cheating to:

- a. use an electronic dictionary
- b. use phonetic dictionaries such as Gabby's Wordspeller
- c. use a calculator
- d. use spell check
- e. type papers for your child
- f. ask teachers for written notes and PowerPoint presentations for lectures in advance (to follow along with the lecture)
- g. ask teachers for help (see Annex 1 possible strategies)
- h. use speech-to-text software

These types of tools and strategies are used by adults daily. It often takes children with dyslexia longer to complete school assignments. Using such tools and



strategies can free up time and preserve energy for other substantive aspects of education or enable the child to pursue activities aligned with his interests and talents.

6. Play Word Games and Activities

- a. Play PIG, HORSE, etc. in basketball. Use words your child has trouble learning.
- b. Play games like Bananagrams (like Scrabble but done as a team instead of individually) or Hangman.
- c. Play with objects such as clay, Lego, or sand to form new words.
- d. Play Jeopardy-like games (using multiplication tables, names/capitols of states, etc.) or rhyming games on car rides. Start when your child is very young, and he won't realize he is studying.
- e. Make up songs, poems, or dances to remember needed information. Multiplication tables or addresses can be sung; spelling of needed words can be made into a poem; the meaning of Latin roots can be expressed in a dance.

7. Getting Organized

- a. Show your child systems to:
 - i. keep track of homework assignments, test and project due dates.
 - ii. file notes, completed assignments, etc.
 - iii. quickly distinguish (in her folder) completed homework and other materials that have to be turned in to the teacher.
 - iv. how to use an appointment calendar or day planner.
- b. Use colors to organize as much as possible (e.g., colored post-its and folders).

- c. Get your child a laptop or other portable digital device (e.g., iPad, smart phone) and work with her to develop a system for organizing all assignments (keeps everything in one place).
- d. Display a laminated picture of how her desk is supposed to look when it is clean and organized, instead of repeatedly saying "clean your desk."
- e. Display a laminated picture of a proper table setting instead of repeatedly saying "the fork goes on the left."
- f. Give instructions in writing in the form of a checklist.
- g. Teach your child to make step-by-step lists of tasks (e.g., "brush your teeth, feed the dogs, put lunch money in wallet, etc."; or "check lost & found for P.E. shorts, ask math teacher about Problem #7," "sign up for basketball, etc."). Keep the lists in the same place.
- h. Teach your child to remind herself about things by promptly leaving herself voicemails or sending herself emails, and activating alarms or reminders on a PDA.
- i. Encourage use of Google Apps since they are readily accessible from any device with internet capability. If he loses his phone, computer, iPad etc., just log on to Google and everything will be right there since it's "in the cloud." Google calendar can be "programmed" to send email reminders of calendared events.
- j. **IMPORTANT:** Give your child options and let her decide which systems work best.

8. Textbooks

- a. Get two sets of textbooks. Leave one set at school to take to class, and one set at home for studying and homework. This eliminates all sorts of "forgetting" problems. Some schools will loan extra books, but all will hold you responsible for lost or damaged books.

- b. Break up textbooks and rebind them by chapters to make them less intimidating.
- c. Color code textbooks to match notebooks and folders.
- d. Join Bookshare (www.bookshare.org). (for scanned books-including certain textbooks in connection with text-to-speech programs such as Kurzweil or Read & Write Gold).
- e. Use audio versions of textbooks (see website for Learning Ally at www.learningally.org).

9. Homework

- a. Purchase an assignment notebook. Your child should write down each assignment for each class each day. If there is no assignment then he should write "No Homework."
- b. In school find a study buddy. Help each other by studying together and exchanging classroom notes with one another.
- c. Ask the teacher to give assignments in writing (not to be copied from a chalk/writing board).
- d. Have your child use his cell phone to take a picture of assignments (written on chalk/writing board).
- e. Break down long-term projects or lengthy readings into smaller, more manageable tasks.
- f. Have your child repeat the instructions out loud before he begins an assignment.
- g. If your child has to write an assignment, have him dictate it to you. Then he can re-copy it.
- h. If your child has to write an essay and do a related PowerPoint presentation, have him do the PowerPoint first (it can act as an outline for the essay).
- i. If your child has to write an essay, have him use a graphic organizer such as Inspiration

software (www.inspiration.com); it helps organize ideas and details, and generates an outline.

- j. If your child has problems keeping arithmetic columns in a line, use graph paper. If graph paper is not available, turn lined paper sideways.
- k. If your child asks how to spell a word, spell it for him. Or get him a phonetic and/or electronic dictionary.
- l. For long reading assignments, consider Learning Ally or other audiobook sources, or Bookshare or other scanned books together with text-to-speech software such as Kurzweil or Read & Write Gold. Even if your child uses recordings, make certain he reads along in the text. The next option is for someone to read to him. The third option is to take turns reading one paragraph at a time. However, sometimes when students read out loud, their energy goes into decoding the words and very little room is left for comprehension. Reading aloud can also slow the process down.
- m. Teach your child that homework is not complete until your child puts everything into his backpack ready for school the next morning, and then turns it in to the teacher.

10. Computers

- a. Get your child a laptop or PDA and help her create a system for organizing assignments (keeps everything in one place).
- b. Have your child learn to type at an early age. Be sure he learns full finger typing, not hunt-and-peck. Try computer games for very young children that teach basics of typing—Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing.
- c. Try using larger fonts or increase point size when reading or typing text.



- d. If she is interested, encourage her to learn a computer language or program such as Scratch www.scratch.mit.edu/ (many individuals with dyslexia are great at this).

11. Foreign Language Requirements

- a. Consider Latin - it may be easier for some children with dyslexia to learn because many English words are Latin-based and roots will be familiar. However, some Latin courses emphasize the written (rather than spoken) language or focus on vocabulary memorization - this can be very difficult for children with dyslexia.
- b. Consider Italian or Spanish - since their spelling patterns are more regular and predictable, they may be easier for some children with dyslexia to learn than other languages.
- c. Hawaiian may also be a good language to consider because of its limited alphabet and phonetically regular structure.
- d. Consider American Sign Language - it is often easier for children with dyslexia to learn, and can provide real career opportunities. However, check into college "entrance" requirements - will they accept American Sign Language or other credits instead of foreign language requirements?
- e. Consider taking an abbreviated foreign language class during the summer, or asking for a language waiver in a high school - some private schools have granted these.

12. Assistive Technologies

Attend HIDA's "Amazing Technologies" workshop.

Consult these organizations for assistive technology information and resources: Assistive Technology Resource Centers of Hawai'i (ATRC; www.atrc.org; 532-7110)

Center on Technology and Disability
(www.ctdoinstitute.org)

- a. Kurzweil Education Systems
www.kurzweilededu.com
(scaffolded reading, writing, and study skills solutions for struggling learners, including text-to-speech software)
- b. WYNN Literacy (text-to-speech software)
www.freedomscientific.com
- c. Kurzweil-National Federation of the Blind Readers
(K-Reader Mobile Products)
www.knfbreader.com
(text-to-speech software loaded into a KNFB Reader Camera or compatible cell phone)
- d. ClaroRead
www.clarosoftware.com
(text-to-speech)
- e. Read & Write Gold
www.readwritegold.com
(text-to-speech software)
- f. Intel Reader
www.intel.com
(portable hand-held text-to-speech)
- g. Kindle
www.amazon.com
(text-to-speech feature; enlarged font)
- h. Reading Pens
www.readingpen.com
(portable, text-to speech)
- i. Iris Pen Scanner
www.irislink.com
(portable, hand-held scanner)
- j. Wizcom Technologies
www.wizcomtech.com
(portable, hand-held scanner)
- k. Dragon Naturally Speaking
www.nuance.com
(speech-to-text software)
- l. IBM ViaVoice
www-01.ibm.com/software/voice/
(speech-to-text dictation software)



- m. Inspiration software
www.inspiration.com
(graphic organizer software)
- n. LiveScribe Smart Pens
www.livescribe.com
(note-taking and recording pen)
- o. Franklin Electronics
www.franklin.com
(portable "talking" spelling checkers, dictionaries, thesauruses, translators)
- p. Co:Writer
www.donjohnston.com
(interprets spelling and grammar mistakes and offers word suggestions)
- q. WordQ
www.wordq.com
(suggests words to use and provides spoken feedback to help find mistakes)

13. Write and talk to your child's teachers at the beginning of each school year

- a. Educate them about dyslexia - assume they know little or nothing about the subject.
- b. Enclose the HIDA dyslexia brochure and "Teachers' Checklist."
- c. Invite them to a "dyslexia simulation" (see Item 24).
- d. Give specific examples of how your child's dyslexia may affect him in the classroom. (e.g., difficulty copying assignments from the blackboard, reading aloud, taking notes, spelling, calculations without a calculator, etc.)
- e. Discuss the list of "Things to not say or do" in Item 19.
- f. Ask them to tell you if your child is having difficulty with class work or homework, or with other students.
- g. Tell them you will be helping your child by typing reports, reading out loud to him, etc.

- h. If reading out loud in front of others humiliates your child, ask the teacher to substitute other tasks.
- i. Keep records of your interactions with teachers and schools, and learn the rules of the educational system so that you can advocate for your child.
- j. Be prepared to have the same conversations over and over each year, as your child has new teachers who need to be educated about dyslexia.
- k. Remember to thank them early and often.

14. Special Procedures to Facilitate Learning

- a. Advocate for your child, and explain to your child what you are saying/doing and WHY, so she will learn how to advocate for herself.
- b. Consider asking your child's teachers and school for special procedures to facilitate your child's learning. Examples are listed in Annex 1. Not all of the procedures will be appropriate or available in each instance, and the list is not exhaustive. It is intended to give parents ideas to discuss with teachers and schools.
- c. Teach your child to advocate for herself.

15. Effective Instruction - Structured Literacy

Structured Literacy (also known as Multisensory Structured Language or MSL) is instruction which is explicit, systematic, cumulative and supported by research. This instruction is evidenced-based and integrates all aspects of literacy - listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

- a. Find schools with structured literacy trained teachers in early elementary school programs.
- b. Find public schools with DOE structured literacy programs.



- c. Consider private structured literacy tutoring. (download list of private, fee-for-service structured literacy tutors at <http://hi.dyslexiaida.org/>)
- d. While it is preferable to have another structured literacy trained educator work with your child, if this is not an option (or to supplement the work done by that person), consider getting trained in structured literacy strategies to help teach your child to read, write and spell.

16. Have your child assessed by the DOE, a psychologist or private testing/assessment organization

- a. If your child is assessed as eligible for special education services, he may have the opportunity to participate in a DOE structured literacy program, or to receive certain remediation from the DOE.
- b. If your child has a special education or specific learning disability assessment, let the school and teachers know. Even if your child attends a private school that may not be equipped to provide remediation, your child may be entitled to reasonable accommodations. See Item 15 above for possible sources of remediation. See Annex 1 for possible accommodations. The school may require formal determination of required accommodations from a professional.
- c. Private school children may qualify for DOE assessment and possibly DOE private school special education projects. Assessment and participation is arranged through the school the child would be attending if he was in public school.
- d. Take advantage of programs (e.g., tutoring, student services, seminars) that are offered by the DOE.

17. Take a workshop from Learning Disabilities Association of Hawai'i

Currently, the DOE assesses for "specific learning disability," which includes dyslexia. LDAH, Hawai'i's Parent Training and Information Center, holds small group sessions and larger educational workshops to help parents of children with special needs to learn about their child's disability, understand laws supportive to children with disabilities and prepare for Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings with the child's school under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004. Individualized assistance for parents is also available by phone, via email or in one-to-one mentoring sessions. To meet the most critical needs, LDAH also provides case advocacy. (www.LDAHawaii.org ; 536-9684).

18. Speech Therapy

If your child needs speech therapy, apply for an assessment and services from the University of Hawai'i speech clinic (free of charge). Other possibilities might include services for very young children (0 – 3 years old) from the Hawai'i Department of Health, DOE special education preschool services, Scottish Rite Preschool for speech disorders, the Elks Club Service project and private speech therapy.

19. Things to not say or do

- a. "This is easy."
- b. Put unhappy faces on her paper.
- c. "Get your act together and learn to do it right."
- d. "You're just not applying yourself."
- e. "Try harder."
- f. "You knew it yesterday."
- g. Humiliate her in front of the entire class.
- h. Say in front of the entire class that "everyone is dismissed except for_____."

20. Transitions

- a. Plan for transitions (especially for entry into middle school, high school or college).

- b. If needed, take off the first week of each school year to help your child transition to his classes.
- c. Growth spurts, hormonal and other changes can create temporary "set-backs" in things like organizational skills. Take a deep breath and start again – your child will get back on track.

Encourage the reading of all kinds of materials.

21. Read books recommended by the International Dyslexia Association (www.dyslexiaida.org) including

PROUST AND THE SQUID
BY MARYANNE WOLF

OVERCOMING DYSLEXIA
BY SALLY SHAYWITZ

Many of the books listed in *Recommended Reading for Parents* may be borrowed from the HIDA library.

22. Check out these websites with information on dyslexia, learning disabilities in general, etc.

- a. www.dyslexiaida.org
(International Dyslexia Association)
- b. www.Idonline.org
("All-around" website sponsored by WETA (public broadcasting), Washington, D.C., in association with the Coordinated Campaign for Learning Disabilities)
- c. www.NCLD.org
(National Center for Learning Disabilities)

- d. www.pbs.org/wgbh/misunderstoodminds
(Collaborative effort between PBS and WGBH Education Foundation, presenting some of Mel Levine's work in ways easy to comprehend)
- e. www.allkindsofminds.org
(Mel Levine's website on understanding learning problems and identifying relevant interventions)
- f. www.callscotland.org.uk/Resources/
(Communication and Assistive Technology for People with Disabilities including iPad apps for learners with dyslexia)
- g. www.lincs.ed.gov
(Literacy Information and Communication Center is a national dissemination and professional development system, providing information on literacy research, practice, and resources.)
- h. www.cec.sped.org
(Council for Exceptional Children: Special Education (generic) website)
- i. www.childrenofthecode.org
(Website addressing "the code and the challenge of learning to read")

23. Download Free IDA Publications for Families and Teachers at www.dyslexiaida.org and share with your child's teachers and other family members.

- a. IDA Dyslexia Handbook: What Every Family Should Know
- b. Dyslexia in the Classroom: What Every Teacher Needs to Know
- c. Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading

24. Consider attending conferences/symposia to listen to experts and learn new ideas/cutting edge techniques

- a. HIDA professional development conferences



- b. International Dyslexia Association annual conference at www.dyslexiaida.org
- c. Brain and Learning Conference at www.edupr.com

25. Dyslexia simulations

- a. Attend HIDA's Dyslexia Simulations Workshop. With more insight into the challenges your child faces, you may be better able to assist her in finding "work-arounds" for her difficulties.
- b. See the simulation located at www.pbs.org/wgbh/misunderstoodminds

26. Watch the film, JOURNEY INTO DYSLLEXIA (HBO Presentation)

27. Watch EMBRACING DYSLLEXIA Directed by Luis Macias (www.embracingdyslexia.com)

28. Watch the film, DISLECKSIA: THE MOVIE Directed by Harvey Hubbell V (www.dislecksiafilmthemovie.com)

29. Join or form a parent support group to encourage each other, and share information and experiences

- a. Create a blog
- b. Join LinkedIn, subscribe to groups such as IDA, LDOnline, and post discussion questions or comments.
- c. Join Twitter and follow tweets from professionals in the field such as Lou Salza of Lawrence School and Carolyn Cowen (educator and social entrepreneur), etc. (They are prolific readers and share a lot of resources).

30. Identify famous people with dyslexia; Expose your child to role models

Thomas Edison	Leonardo da Vinci	Anderson Cooper
Charles Schwab	James Earl Jones	Caitlyn Jenner
Pablo Picasso	Greg Louganis	Magic Johnson
Jackie Stewart	Will Smith	Erin Brockovich
Jay Leno	Henry Ford	Salma Hayek
Avi	Richard Branson	Whoopi Goldberg
Agatha Christie	Orlando Bloom	Danny Glover
Henry Winkler	Jewel	George S. Patton
Steven Spielberg	Dwight D. Eisenhower	
Robert Kennedy	Tim Tebow	John Lennon
Terry Bradshaw	David Murdock	Bella Thorne

31. Focus on your child's social-emotional health

- a. Take a "mental health day". Kick back and have fun with your child after a difficult part of the quarter or term.
- b. Give your child time, every day, to do whatever he does best - running, skating, drawing, singing, etc. Don't prohibit your child from doing a fun activity as punishment for poor academic success. Also provide time and opportunity to explore and pursue passions and interests as a necessary counterbalance to academic challenges. It is in these endeavors that effort pays off whereas such may not always be the case in the classroom.
- c. Encourage your child to keep private journals - to express herself without being graded or judged. If your child dislikes writing, she could record a journal orally.
- d. Look for the gifts in your child - his dyslexia is "a weakness in a sea of strengths."
- e. Don't fixate on fears of your child being

"labeled" as dyslexic. It is often a great relief for a child to finally have a name for their situation, and to realize it is shared with many other people.

- f. Say "I love you" every day - Often children with dyslexia are singled out daily. Many are laughed at for making mistakes or being "stupid." Those three words of comfort should come from those who love them unconditionally.
- g. Get SAM App to help your child understand and manage their anxiety at:
www.sam-app.org.uk
- h. Do not allow your child to be defined by his diagnosis.
- i. If you embrace his learning difference, he will too. Kids take their lead from their parents.
- j. Self-acceptance is critical to self-awareness, self-advocacy and ultimately, resilience. Parents can do a lot to inoculate their kids against the potential negative impact resulting from ignorance.
- k. Read This: www.ldsucccess.org/parent_guide

32. Thoughts for Parents

Dyslexia is "a weakness in a sea of strengths."

- a. Trust your instincts – you know your child best.
- b. Just because a student qualifies for an accommodation doesn't mean that she knows how to use it. And even if she knows how to use it, it doesn't mean that she will. This is why self-acceptance and having other accomplishments are so important!
- c. Get over it - it's about them, not you.

33. Hawai'i Branch of the International Dyslexia Association

- a. Website: <http://hi.dyslexiaida.org/>
Email: info.hi@dyslexiaida.org
Phone: (808) 538-7007
- b. Get a free copy of *A Resource Guide about Dyslexia for People in Hawai'i* written by Kathy Ferguson, Ph.D.
- c. Search and visit "Hawai'i Dyslexia Facebook".
- d. Join the discussion on Twitter (@HawaiiDyslexia).
- e. Join us at HIDA. We can all share ideas, insights and hope, and work together to improve education and services for children, youth and adults with dyslexia.



Things you may want to discuss with your child's teachers or school:

1. Allow use of a pocket calculator to assist with basic calculations as your child learns higher level math concepts.
2. Allow your child to count on fingers while doing math and or sub vocalize while reading.
3. Partial credit if your child's mathematical procedures were correct, but the answer was incorrect due to errors in computations.
4. Do not require them to always show their work.
5. Read word problems aloud.
6. Minimize drill, repetition and rote memorization.
7. Minimize timed tests.
8. Give your child advance notice so that he can practice at home or after school before being called on to read aloud in class; or not requiring your child to read aloud.
9. Shorten assignments to focus on mastery of key concepts.
10. Shorten spelling tests to focus on mastering the most functional words.
11. Provide alternatives for written assignments (posters, oral/taped or video presentations, projects, collages, etc.).
12. Seat student close to teacher in order to monitor understanding.
13. Provide a print outline with videotapes and filmstrips.
14. Grade only for content not spelling or handwriting – give more weight to content than format.
15. Allow student to use a keyboard if handwriting is poor.
16. Allow student to dictate answer to essay questions.
17. Reduce copying tasks.
18. Give your child a written copy of homework instructions.
19. Give lecture notes to your child before the class so he can highlight them beforehand. Then he can work on listening instead of concentrating on the note taking itself.
20. Send homework and instructions by email.
21. Allow extra time to complete projects, term papers, book reports, etc.
22. Allow extra time to complete a test.
23. Allow your child to dictate test answers.
24. Allow the test to be read to your child.
25. Allow your child to give oral answers to essay questions.
26. Allow rephrasing of test questions.
27. Allow use of electronic dictionaries, books on tape, spellchecker, etc.
28. Allow student to observe others before attempting a new task.
29. When you ask the child a question in front of the class, say his name first so he knows the question is coming up.

