



Dyslexia

A PRACTITIONER'S HANDBOOK

Fifth Edition

Gavin Reid

WILEY

Dyslexia

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WILEY Blackwell

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About the Author

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Dr Gavin Reid is an international consultant and psychologist with consultancies in Canada, the UK, Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Australasia. He was visiting professor at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada, in the Department of Education and Counseling Psychology and Special Education in 2007 and 2010.

He is chair of the British Dyslexia Association (BDA) Accreditation Board and an ambassador for the Helen Arkell Dyslexia Centre in the UK. He is also a consultant for All Special Kids (ASK) in Geneva, Switzerland, The Child Learning Enrichment Medical Centre (CLEMC) in Dubai, the Centre for Child Evaluation and Teaching (CCET) in Kuwait, the Institute of Child Education and Psychology Europe (ICEPE) and the Canadian Academy of Therapeutic Tutors (CATT).

Dr Reid is a fully registered psychologist with the College of Psychologists in BC, Canada, and with the Health and Care Professionals in the UK. He was formerly senior lecturer in the Department of Educational Studies (formerly Department of Special Education), Moray House School of Education, University of Edinburgh from 1991–2007.

He is also co-founder and director of the Red Rose School for children with specific learning difficulties in St. Annes-on-Sea, Lancashire, UK, and is a visiting educational psychologist to learning centres and schools in Switzerland, the UK, the Middle East, Asia, Egypt and Canada. Dr Reid wrote the first university Master's course in dyslexia in the UK in 1992.

Dr Reid is an educational psychologist, university lecturer, researcher and author. He has written 30 books on learning, motivation and learning disabilities, and lectured to thousands of professionals and parents in over 80 countries. His books have been published in Polish, Italian, French, Arabic, Hebrew, Chinese and Slovak.

Many of his books are used as course texts in courses throughout the UK and in many other countries. These include: *Dyslexia: A Practitioner's Handbook*, fourth

edition (Wiley, 2009), *Dyslexia: A Complete Guide for Parents*, second edition (Wiley, 2008), *Dyslexia and Inclusion*, second edition (2014), *Motivating Learners in the Classroom: Ideas and Strategies* (2007) and *Learning Styles and Inclusion* (2005). He is the co-author with Shannon Green of *100+ Ideas for Supporting Pupils with Dyslexia*, *Dyslexia: A Teaching Assistant's Handbook* and *Effective Learning: Ideas into Action* (2009).

He is the co-author of a computer-aided diagnostic assessment and profiling system (Special Needs Assessment Profile—SNAP), which has received three national award commendations and was winner of the Special Needs Category at the NASEN/TES book awards in Birmingham, UK in March 2006.

He is an experienced teacher with over 10 years' experience in the classroom and has held external examiner appointments at 18 universities worldwide for Ph.D. and Master's courses.

He has been a consultant to parent groups and charitable bodies in the UK, Europe, Asia, Australia and New Zealand. He has appeared in television and radio documentaries and news editorials on educational matters in the UK, Poland, Hong Kong, Kuwait, Dubai, France and New Zealand.

http://vod.dmi.ae/media/241780/Studio_One_Season_4_23_10_2013

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c-VpkYoIPOo&feature=youtu.be>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-2yjOw7e7AA>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RhzmqU_hDCI

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OAmsDdM-vkM>

Gavin Reid uses his experiences as a teacher, educational psychologist, researcher, university lecturer and, most importantly, as a parent in the preparation of his books.

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Foreword

By Sir Jackie Stewart

Gavin Reid has asked me to update the foreword for the latest edition of his *Dyslexia: A Practitioner's Handbook*. I wrote the foreword for Gavin's fourth edition of his Handbook in 2009 and, looking back on it, I find very little that I feel needs changing from my original foreword. However, I would like to say that Gavin Reid continues to be a real leader in the world of the dyslexia movement on a global basis.

I hope you will still find my original foreword of some interest.

Gavin has been a great contributor to the entire dyslexia movement and he is now spreading his wings beyond Scotland, the country of his birth, to be involved in the Middle and Far East and North America, and has lectured in many other countries around the world on the subject.

I, for my part, am a dyslexic, who was only identified as such at the age of 41, when both my sons were struggling at school in Switzerland. Although it would have seemed that the school had no great knowledge of anything to do with learning disabilities at the time, they at least recognised that both my sons simply couldn't keep up with the other class members in most of the subjects. They also had the sense to suggest that my sons be assessed, and recommended a specialist in London who could undertake that.

This event had an immense impact on my life because on that very day, during the assessment of my son Mark, the professor involved asked if I personally had ever experienced learning difficulties, which of course I had, having failed almost every exam that my school was able to invent. I walked out of his consulting room with great relief, realising for the first time that I was not 'stupid, dumb or thick', but that I was a dyslexic.

I now commit an enormous amount of my life to the dyslexic movement, not just in Scotland (where I am President of Dyslexia Scotland) and in the rest of the UK (where I am a Vice-President of the British Dyslexia Association), but worldwide, trying to enhance the dyslexic movement, working with governments, ministers for education, university chancellors and deans of teacher-training colleges.

It is very apparent that even with the help that is currently being provided to support those children who are suffering with learning difficulties, unless we immediately integrate with the teacher-training colleges (who need to restructure their curriculum) to ensure that every single new teacher that qualifies into the profession has, at the very least, the skills for the early recognition of children with learning disabilities, and knows how to progress them on to more developed specialists in the field, we are not going to fully deal with, or resolve, the problem.

The educational authorities in a great many countries have a lot to answer for, because to a large extent around the world, a great many educators have simply ignored a child or young person who cannot accomplish the simple skills that others find so easy. They cannot read, write or count correctly, they get blamed for being lazy, for not paying attention, and therefore are identified not only by their teachers, but also by their peers, as being 'dumb, stupid and thick', just as I was.

The pain, removal of self-esteem, frustration and humiliation that this brings to a young person can be devastating and can tarnish their lives forever. The problem moves from classroom to playground and they suffer intensely, to a point where they may turn to the abuse of alcohol and drugs to escape from the reality of their inadequacies.

A very large percentage of the existing established teacher body, because they have not been educated on the subject, allow those children to be left on the scrapheap of the educational system. They therefore leave school with little education, which considerably reduces their opportunity to secure a decent job or even gain employment. They are therefore robbed of the chance to reach their true potential, which, in my opinion, is totally unacceptable and indeed a sin.

A great many dyslexics are truly creative people and those who are able to succeed in life turn out to be hugely successful in many cases. For any government or educational authority to ignore those suffering from dyslexia, which amounts to at least 10% to 15% of the population of any country, is an unacceptable position.

The loss to a nation of many of them, who end up unemployed or turn to crime and end up in prison, is well documented. Well in excess of 65% of the prison population in most countries is dyslexic, which is simply unacceptable in the world in which we live. It would seem that most governments are still unaware of those statistics and that is why the work that Gavin Reid is doing around the world is so important. Gavin has a wealth of experience, with considerable knowledge, and has a proven track record in this field of dyslexia.

This book will benefit a multitude of people who are capable of assisting the young, and the mature, to overcome the hurdle that dyslexia provides. Those who can be led and informed into providing support for dyslexics will themselves be stimulated and fulfilled, through providing a lifeline to those who in many instances have been left as debris in school classrooms around the world. This is not a territorial problem, it is a universal problem.

Few people can communicate as successfully as Gavin Reid on this subject; he reaches out, not just to those who suffer the pains, frustrations and inadequacies that dyslexia provides, but just as importantly, he opens the eyes of the parents to allow

them to give better understanding, consideration and support to the children that they have borne. With more knowledge those same parents are able to make greater demands on the schools, the teachers and authorities, who should be responsible for each and every one of the students who pass through their hands.

With many congratulations to Gavin Reid not only for the creation of this book, but also for spreading the news.



Sir Jackie Stewart

Preface

I have been involved in the field of dyslexia for close to 30 years now and for me it has been a 'mission' with a 'vision'! As one of the 11+ 'casualties' at a time when there was little opportunity for those who did not fit the mould or make the grade, I have a great deal of empathy for those who have been formally diagnosed as dyslexic. I appreciate the sense of feeling different, having to expend more effort for sometimes basic tasks and of course being in awe of those who meet with success rather easily. As in the case of many with dyslexia this adversity generated a steely determination to achieve and to help those who may have experienced, and still may experience, some degree of disadvantage in educational settings.

One of the benefits of this seemingly uphill struggle is that dyslexics are almost forced to do it their way! They develop a working formula for dealing with their challenges. It is based on the individual and uses individualised strategies. It is important that schools and educators appreciate this and allow and encourage all those with dyslexia to think and work outside the box. That is not to say they can do it totally alone. In most cases they can't! They need the support and understanding of their families, teachers, schools, colleges and universities, and the community at large, including the workplace. Sir Jackie Stewart comments on this need for support and understanding in the foreword to this book. This is so important.

This support can take many forms but if it is accompanied by understanding and empathy then the battle is all but won. Support, empathy, appropriate teaching methods, acknowledging the learning differences and the right type of resources used at the right time will make a difference—of this you can be assured!

My role now is quite different from when I first started out. As a teacher I gained important first-hand experience of how literacy difficulties can impact on the educational and occupational choices of young people. I also learned that those who experience difficulties also share some significant strengths, and the key is to identify those strengths to help equip them to use these to overcome their challenges. You will note that the final chapter of this book is called 'Positive Dyslexia', and profiling

this aspect has been one of my enduring missions since 1993 when I wrote the chapter ‘The Other Side of Dyslexia’ as part of the Moray House course texts on dyslexia. It is encouraging that the educational community is also coming round to that view. But I know Sir Jackie endorses the view that there is still much work to be done. I, as a parent, author, seminar presenter and ‘learner’, sincerely hope this this book will go some way towards helping with that aim.

This fifth edition of *Dyslexia: A Practitioner’s Handbook* focuses on the child, the young person and the adult with dyslexia, but it also focuses on the school system, the school management, the curriculum, government policy, differentiation, learning styles, teaching approaches and learning strategies. The most effective method of dealing with dyslexia is dependent on good practice in learning and best practice in teaching. That is the focus of this book.

It is heartening to witness the general acceptance of dyslexia among teachers, administrators and governments. As the twenty-first century has progressed we have seen a number of countries actively seeking out expertise in dyslexia, through legislation and working parties, and thus paving the way for changes in school systems to accommodate the needs of students such as those with dyslexia. But as Sir Jackie Stewart indicates in the foreword to this book, there is still much to be done. This was the case in 2009 and it is still the case today in 2015!

One of these areas is in teacher education. There are still a number of unresolved issues, particularly in pre-service training, but there has been significant progress in professional development for teachers with the development of specialised training courses in dyslexia. This is extremely encouraging as it is readily acknowledged by those working in this field that every teacher in every classroom should have at least an awareness of dyslexia, and every school should have at least one teacher who has been on a higher-level training course in dyslexia.

There are now dyslexia courses being run at universities and colleges in many countries and these courses, with a mix of theory and practice, can provide teachers with the understanding of what dyslexia is and the practical knowledge to tackle it in the classroom situation. More than that, however, courses should help teachers to understand children with dyslexia, their needs, their challenges and their abilities.

When I wrote the first edition of this book in 1994, there were few courses available and even fewer at university level. It is encouraging to witness how the field has developed since then, but what has provided most satisfaction has been the efforts by schools and education authorities to request and endorse professional development and support the training of teachers in dyslexia. This has been at a number of levels—short courses, courses for teaching assistants and lengthier postgraduate university courses. It is these levels of training that will ensure that children with dyslexia are understood and their needs met.

It is important also to consider parents—they have much to offer; their experiences, their insights and their support can be invaluable to schools. It is perhaps this collaboration that is the key to eventual success. Research findings can inform, but the real impact can come with effective communication between home and school. The sharing of concerns and the exchange of ideas can prove invaluable.

I sincerely hope this book can facilitate this in some way and that the information and the reflection provided will help to reduce anxieties, raise hopes and foster collaboration, and that the success they deserve will come about for all those children, young people and adults who have encountered the challenges that being dyslexic can bring.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge those who have shared their experiences of dyslexia with me and helped in this way to contribute to the book, as well as the large number of teachers, psychologists, administrators and parents I have spoken with over the years. I would also like to thank Sir Jackie Stewart for writing the foreword to this book and for the dedication, conviction and ongoing support he has shown to the field of dyslexia in every way. This has helped a great many parents and teachers to be more equipped and better able to meet the challenges of dyslexia at school and at home.



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Chapter 1

Defining Dyslexia

This chapter will:

- discuss the purpose of a definition for dyslexia;
- provide pointers to indicate the current breadth of research in the area of dyslexia, which will be followed up in Chapter 2;
- examine the factors that influence the development of a working definition of dyslexia;
- look at the implications of DSM-5 for the use of the term 'dyslexia';
- highlight the impact of different perspectives and agendas in developing an operational definition for dyslexia;
- provide a focus on the area of positive dyslexia, looking at what they *can* do, not what they can't do.

As indicated in the last point above, it is important to focus on the positive aspects of dyslexia. One of the earliest pioneers in this area was Tom West, whose landmark book *In the Mind's Eye* (1997) provided a launch pad for a new wave of research into the positive aspects of dyslexia. Perhaps one of the more refreshing statements regarding the potential attributes of people with dyslexia is made by West himself when he says: 'it is becoming increasingly clear [that much of the success attributed to people with dyslexia¹] is because of the dyslexia not in spite of it' (West, 2014, p.78). West goes on to say that for years now we 'have too often focused on fixing the problems—and have totally ignored the development of talents' (p.87).

Dyslexia is often seen as a hidden disability and the estimates from a range of sources suggest that 10–15% of the population have dyslexia and around 4–5% severely.

¹ Author's insertion.

It is important to be clear when defining dyslexia; and a working definition must take the positive and creative aspects into account. Too often definitions can be general, vague and essentially serve little purpose. They can also be misinterpreted and misused. Definitions need to be contextualised so they are relevant to the teaching and learning context. This chapter will provide clarification on the use of definitions and highlight the need to consider a working definition for dyslexia.

Defining Dyslexia

The questions one needs to ask are—do we really need to define dyslexia and can we really encapsulate the features and the feelings that accompany dyslexia in a single statement? These points can be considered when one asks people with dyslexia questions such as ‘what is dyslexia?’ and ‘what does it mean to you?’ As part of the research for this book I asked some children and adults those questions! There was a considerable range of responses. Some of the responses are shown below.

‘A problem transferring my knowledge into written work.’

‘For me it is frustration at not being able to complete tasks on time.’

‘Being different from everyone else.’

‘Wanting to read books but not getting past the first page.’

‘Having a bad memory and being so disorganised.’

‘Feeling different from everyone else.’

‘Inconsistency in my work—some days I get it right and other days I get the same thing wrong.’

‘I find it difficult to listen to the teacher for more than a few minutes.’

The following comment came from a teacher who is dyslexic.

I do not define dyslexia as a bad aspect of my life, I would not be the person I am today if I did not have dyslexia as a part of my genetic and biological makeup. My characteristics of dyslexia have moulded my personality and the experiences and choices I have made in my life, for the good and for the bad. The negative aspects of dyslexia for me is the frustration, confusion and embarrassment I feel when I am involved with tasks which will highlight my difficulties—those which involve memory recall, sequencing, numbers and spelling. I will forget how to do things or misinterpret the instructions, particularly if they were given recently and quickly. The difficulties in being able to remember numbers is real and can cause problems, for example I do not know my parents’, partner’s or children’s telephone numbers. I also find it very difficult to find my way around the alphabet and this affects me on a daily basis. However, it is important to try and keep dyslexia in perspective and see the positive effect it can have on my life. I feel I can empathise with my pupils and their parents/carers. It helps me to keep working to create accessible teaching resources and approaches; perhaps it feeds my creativity and the speed of ideas, planning and focus which I have. These

benefits outweigh the negative aspects because they have enabled me to create effective strategies which help me to carry out the vast majority of tasks and responsibilities I have. Despite the embarrassment dyslexia can and does cause me, I function quite well in this society. But I appreciate that I am fortunate and have opportunities and support which others may not.

Reading through these statements one is struck by the emotional feelings attached to them—and that is the problem with a definition of dyslexia: it provides a definitive and descriptive response to what for many can be an area of emotional stress and personal conflict. Yet for education and research purposes a definition is necessary: it is necessary to assist in developing identification and diagnostic criteria and to inform intervention. Definitions can help to provide a label. For many parents a label is necessary as it can help to kickstart the support process. For adults with dyslexia it can help them develop self-knowledge and eventually coping strategies. For teachers it can provide explanations as to why the child may not be responding to the intervention provided. A definition therefore can be an important catalyst in this process. This is why it is important to emphasise the positive aspects of dyslexia. A good source of information is the Dyslexia Advantage website (<http://community.dyslexicadvantage.org>).

This website highlights why it is important to understand the advantages of dyslexia and helps children and adults gain personal insights into their own learning traits, thereby providing the means for them to become independent, more insightful and more successful learners.

The problem, however, lies in the lack of a universally accepted definition of dyslexia. The recent revision of the Diagnostic Statistical Manual (DSM-5) (American Psychological Association, 2013) is unlikely to help the cause much as ‘specific learning disorder’ is now the generic term to be used for reading, writing and mathematical difficulties. There are certainly sub-categories, but the authors of the DSM see the generic term as a positive aspect and believe that it is less restrictive and less limiting than previously. DSM-5 indicates that the diagnosis requires persistent difficulties in reading, writing, arithmetic or mathematical reasoning skills during the formal years of schooling. Symptoms may include inaccurate or slow and effortful reading, poor written expression that lacks clarity, difficulties remembering number facts or inaccurate mathematical reasoning.

A very crucial comment is made in the factsheet that accompanies DSM-5 when it indicates that the DSM-5 Neurodevelopmental Work Group concluded that the many definitions of dyslexia and dyscalculia meant those terms would not be useful as disorder names or in the diagnostic criteria.

It is true there are many different definitions of dyslexia, but there are many dimensions to dyslexia—dyslexia is not represented by a single entity (or caused by a single gene). Dyslexia is multifaceted and that can explain why a single, universally accepted definition has not yet been achieved. It can be argued, however, there is some agreement on the constellation of factors that can contribute to dyslexia, but controversy surrounds the respective weighting of these factors.

For example, the range of factors that can be associated with dyslexia includes the following:

- Structural and functional brain-related factors (Galaburda and Rosen, 2001; Hynd et al., 1995).
- Genetic factors affecting the developmental migration of magnocells in utero and influencing their subsequent function (Stein, 2008).
- Genetic correlations (Gilger, 2008).
- Procedural timing of sequences in task accomplishment (Fawcett and Nicolson, 2008).
- Processing speed (Wolf and Bowers, 2000).
- Inter-hemisphere transfer (Breznitz, 2008).
- Difficulty in automatising skills (Fawcett and Nicolson, 1992).
- Working memory difficulties (Jeffries and Everatt, 2004).
- Phonological deficit (Snowling, 2000).
- Language features—orthographic transparency (Wimmer, 1993; Share, 2008; Everatt and Elbeheri, 2008).
- Comorbidity between learning disabilities (Bishop and Snowling, 2004; Visser, 2003).
- Literacy achievement levels and the role of IQ in diagnosis (Siegel and Lipka, 2008; Joshi and Aaron, 2008; Wagner, 2008).
- Positive skills (West, 2014; Nicolson et al., 2012; Nicolson, 2014).

These points above illustrate the diversity found among the dyslexic population and are some of the factors that can influence our understanding of dyslexia. Each can have an impact on how dyslexia is perceived and how assessment and intervention are portrayed.

Purpose of Definitions

Definitions of dyslexia, particularly those used by education authorities, school districts, voluntary organisations and associations are abundant, and some will be shown here. Often they serve a particular purpose and it is possible to categorise the type of function they serve.

- *Allocation*—Used to allocate resources and develop provision, these definitions can focus on discrepancies and provide discrepancy criteria in order that those who need additional support and special provision can be readily identified. The controversial issue may arise with children who have very high ability and whose reading or writing is in the average range. Clearly they are underperforming and need additional support, but because they are not failing in reading they may be overlooked. It is crucial, therefore, that a full assessment is administered and takes in the whole picture, looking at the child's complete profile.