

Overcoming Dyslexia FOR **DUMMIES®**

by Tracey Wood, MEd



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Dyslexia***
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About the Author

Tracey Wood was born in England. She went to teachers college in Leeds and graduated with an honors degree in psychology and education. She taught in a special school for four years and loved it. But sunnier climes called, and she left England for a backpacking vacation in Australia. Twelve years later she was still enjoying the warmth of Australia but had traded her backpack for a husband and two kids.

In Australia, Tracey earned a diploma in special education and a master's degree in education. For several years she ran a high school special education unit and then started her own reading clinic. In the 1990s Tracey moved (with her husband's job) to the San Francisco Bay area. She ran a reading and writing clinic; helped in her kids' school; led two scouting troops; instructed for the Red Cross; created her Web site, ReadingPains.com; and wrote her first book, *See Johnny Read! The 5 Most Effective Ways To End Your Son's Reading Problems*.

Still on the move, Tracey relocated to Toronto and wrote her second and third books, *Teaching Kids to Read For Dummies* and *Teaching Kids to Spell For Dummies*. While writing *Overcoming Dyslexia For Dummies*, she relocated again, to Boston.

Tracey is a literacy consultant and public speaker. She writes articles for magazines like *Big Apple Parent* and *Teachers of Vision*, has appeared on Access *Help TV* and national radio shows like *Parent's Journal* and *The Parent's Report*, and is committed to steering (albeit unsteadily) her two children through childhood with all their limbs and faculties intact.

Dedication

My gorgeous girls: I know you didn't get a choice, but thanks anyway for putting up with the moods that I blame on artistic temperament, the stories that I tell with artistic license, and my unreliable cooking. Pretty much everything I do feels better because of you and is dedicated to you (both of you, *equally!*).

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They say it takes a village to raise a child, and in my opinion, much the same is true of bringing a book into being. My village is small, but the hearts and talent in it are big:

David Futterman, a university instructor, high school teacher, educational therapist, and active member of the International Dyslexia Association, has experience and qualifications galore in dyslexia. He's also very nice. Thank you a zillionfold, David, for being my right-hand man with this book. Hope you enjoyed the view.

As well as answering every one of my questions and finding plenty of my mistakes, David introduced me to Kathy Futterman, who took time out of her busy teaching and parenting schedule to road-test some products for me. Kathy, I so appreciated your help!

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Introduction

You've picked up this book because you're concerned about your child. He isn't keeping up in class, hates to read, and makes spelling errors even in simple words. Is he dyslexic? Should you be asking for an assessment? What can you do to help him at home?

Or maybe you're flicking through these pages for yourself. When you were at school, you felt dumb, and now you avoid reading and hate to write. You're wondering whether you should call yourself "dyslexic" and, if you do, whether it will make much difference in your life. I hear you! You need straightforward, practical, upbeat advice.

I spend my (happy and ever-so-rewarding) working life helping dyslexic children and adults. I know I change lives. Sincerely, warmly, and rather proudly, I offer you this book so you too can make a difference.

About This Book

In this book, I give you all the relevant information and cut the rest. I don't bury you under a mound of theories, lose you in terminology, or wear you out with alternatives. I don't preach, prattle, or pretend there's always one definitive answer. Instead, I give you honest information about the stuff that matters. And I move you quickly from theory to practice.

You get hands-on activities your child can start straight away, strategies that are good for his whole lifetime, and handy tips for dealing with daily problems (like how to help him get organized and keep his *b*'s and *d*'s facing the right way once and for all). For teens and adults, I give the scoop on things like note taking, applying to college, and succeeding in the workforce. And to keep you on the ball with current research, you get news about brain mapping, dyslexia therapies, and the reading programs most educators prefer.

Whether you're just beginning to consider the term *dyslexia* or you've already done some research; whether you've got your child's IEP underway or you've never heard of an IEP; whether you want reassurance, practical strategies, or legal details made easy, this book is for you. Surf through it or immerse yourself chapter by chapter, as you need. The chapters in this book let you pick and

choose, but they also follow a logical progression. There's so much information in here that you're sure to get the guidance you're looking for. And whatever your needs and interests, you'll love the Part of Tens, where you get quick lists, each of ten items, of really handy stuff.

Conventions Used in This Book

To *he* or not to *he*? In this book, I clean up that sticky dilemma by using *he* and *she* in alternate chapters. You can be sure this book is for everyone, and once you're used to the idea of switching between *he* and *she*, you'll probably end up thinking all other books should do the same.

In this book, I give you a lot of current prices for materials, therapy, tutoring, and more. These prices can change over time, so use them as your guide rather than as set-in-stone facts.

I feature a few other conventions to help you work your way through this book:

- ✓ *Italic* points out defined terms or emphasizes a word.
- ✓ **Boldface** text indicates keywords in bulleted lists and the action part of numbered steps.
- ✓ `Monofont` highlights Web addresses.

When this book was printed, some Web addresses may have needed to break across two lines of text. If that happened, rest assured that we haven't put in any extra characters (such as hyphens) to indicate the break. So, when using one of these Web addresses, just type in exactly what you see in this book, pretending that the line break doesn't exist.

And here's one more fact that you should know before you fully dive into this book: A lot of the information about testing and all the information on Individualized Education Programs (see Chapters 6 and 8, respectively) apply only to public (federally funded) schools.

What You're Not to Read

A lot of books about dyslexia seem to revel in technical jargon. This book doesn't. It gives you the jargon, sparingly, and warns you in advance with

the Technical Stuff icon so that you don't have to read it if you don't want to. Don't let the jargon scare you though; it's there in case you need to assert yourself or write smart requests, applications, and other formal stuff. The Technical Stuff icon also highlights info that's interesting but not crucial to your understanding of dyslexia.

As well as bits of jargon, you're going to see sidebars in this book (they're in the shaded gray boxes). Sidebars offer bonus or additional information that you don't *have* to read but may enjoy all the same.

Foolish Assumptions

Because you're reading this book, I'm assuming the following about you:

- ✓ You'd like to help a child, or yourself, better understand dyslexia. You may be the parent of a child or a young adult who's having difficulty reading and may be dyslexic, or you may be a teacher looking for information so you can help dyslexic students and their parents. You may even be an adult looking for tips for yourself.
- ✓ You need plain-talking, down-to-earth guidance about things like your rights and the kinds of strategies that can make your life easier.
- ✓ You'd like pointers of how to get things right but not reams of jargon.

How This Book Is Organized

This book has six parts, all filled to the brim with information about dyslexia.

Part 1: Figuring Out What Dyslexia Is All About

In this part, I establish exactly what dyslexia does and doesn't mean. The "doesn't" part is important because, as many educators point out, the term dyslexia gets so overused that its meaning can be obscured. I also talk about the causes and types of dyslexia and give you an overview of the symptoms to watch out for at any age.

Part II: Determining When to Get a Diagnosis

In this part, it's time to look more closely at the signs of dyslexia. I examine your child's behavior in the preschool and school years and show you when and how to get an assessment.

Part III: Exploring Your Options for Schools and Programs

Your child struggles every day in class, but would he do any better in another class or even another school? How much does private tutoring cost, and are some learning centers better for your child than others? How can you make sure that your dyslexic child has a good Individualized Education Program (IEP), and what can you do to make schoolwork easier for him if he doesn't have an IEP? And how can you work effectively with your child's teacher? In this part, I answer your big questions.

Part IV: Taking Part in Your Child's Treatment

Most treatment for dyslexia involves structured multisensory and phonics-based instruction. Not sure what I'm talking about? That's fine. This part of the book explains it all in simple, straightforward terms that you can feel completely comfortable with. I also tell you about methods of memorizing, visualizing, and rhyming to help your child read more fluently; show you how to establish a happy reading routine; and give you tips to help your child accomplish everyday tasks easily.

Part V: Moving beyond the Childhood Years

Anyone who's been through high school in the last few decades has heard (at least a little) about stuff like portfolios, community service, and college entrance exams. In this part I tell you what dyslexics do to make these kinds of things less formidable during the college application process. I also give you the lowdown on helping your dyslexic child adjust to the teen years and show adult dyslexics how to be more successful in the real world.

Part VI: The Part of Tens

The Part of Tens is where a whole bunch of useful information gets boiled down to wonderfully easy lists. Here you get ten tools for making a dyslexic's life easier and ten dyslexia treatments and programs.

Part VII: Appendixes

In Part VII, I leave you with a battery of tests so you can determine your child's grasp on phonics skills, and I also include a handy reference guide to a variety of dyslexia resources.

Icons Used in This Book

The following icons highlight noteworthy information throughout the book.



This icon tells you that a piece of advice or an activity is good for adults as well as (or instead of) younger little beings.



You'll see this icon when I offer information that's really worth hanging onto.



Here's your alert to interesting but nonessential information (such as jargon). Skip ahead or brace yourself!



This icon means I'm offering a golden nugget of handy advice, probably learned firsthand.



Here's something you *don't* want to do. This icon warns you of the land mines that you may encounter.

Where to Go from Here

If you're not sure whether your child needs an assessment for dyslexia, you've come to the right place. Go to Chapter 3 to learn about general indicators of dyslexia, Chapter 4 for specific signs you may see during the preschool and kindergarten years, or Chapter 5 for signs of dyslexia that surface (or don't go away) later in school. Chapter 6 has details on testing.

If your child has already been diagnosed as dyslexic and is eligible for extra help, or an Individualized Education Program, at school, go to Chapter 8. If you know that your dyslexic child doesn't get an IEP and you want to know what options are left, skip ahead to Chapter 9. To get straight into doing your own reading activities, open up at Chapter 13.

Not in that much of a rush? Great! You'll enjoy the traditional journey through this book, starting at Chapter 1 and working through. Take your time, and especially mull over points that apply exactly to you. This is your map for guiding your dyslexic child surely forward.

Part I

Figuring Out What Dyslexia Is All About

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"Our daughter is definitely dyslexic. I knew I shouldn't have played all those 'Jumble' word games while I was pregnant!"

In this part . . .

This book contains a tremendous amount of information, so in this part I help you get off on the right foot with some basic but essential facts. First, you find out what *dyslexia* really means (and what it doesn't mean). I cover its possible causes and the different forms that it takes. Then, when you're revving, I show you how dyslexia may be indicated in your child's behavior, no matter how old he is. Got your water and sensible footwear? Off you go!