

Reading Disabilities: 15 Causes and 10 Solutions

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I am once again so thrilled to welcome Dr. Erica Warren to Minds in Bloom. This post is a must-read for any teacher (or parent) who teaches reading or works with struggling readers.

Reading Disabilities

15 Causes and 10 Solutions



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Many young learners encounter obstacles with the reading process and, for some, it is a pervasive problem. New estimates report that as many as 1 in 10 children have reading disabilities, such as dyslexia, that impact academics in the areas of word decoding, reading comprehension, reading fluency, word retrieval, reading speed, and tracking. So what can we do to help these struggling readers? First, we can learn to recognize the common indicators so that students can be formally tested and diagnosed. Second, we can learn about the remedial tools and resources that can help these students traverse and manage these hurdles.

15 Common Causes of Reading Disabilities

1. Trouble rhyming words
2. Problems memorizing number, letter, and word sequences
3. Mis-sequencing of sounds or syllables in a word (pissgetti – for spaghetti)
4. Perceives letter and number sequences correctly but remembers and recalls them in a different order
5. Misreads and skips words
6. Trouble sounding out words
7. Problems spelling
8. Word finding difficulties
9. Difficulties with rote memorization
10. Repetitions, transpositions, additions, substitutions, and omissions of letters, numbers and/or words
11. Difficulty understanding idioms, inferences, and jokes
12. Problems tracking from left to right across a page
13. Dizziness, headaches, or stomach aches reported while reading
14. Problems discriminating the difference between similar sounding letters and words
15. Trouble understanding word problems

10 Solutions for Reading Disabilities

1. Black text on a white background can be visually uncomfortable for many children, as the contrast can make the letters appear to move or vibrate. If this is the case, then you can make color overlays. You can cut out your own overlays by using transparent, colorful report covers or pocket folders. I like to use a paper cutter and slice them into strips that can be used as bookmarks too. As another option, you can purchase glasses with color-tinted lenses. The most popular colors are blue and yellow.
2. Similarly, if changing the background color is helpful when reading, these students will probably benefit from changing the background when typing. On a Mac computer using MS Word, this can be completed by selecting the Format drop down menu and then choosing background. Here other background colors can be selected. Please note that the background will not be impacted when printing documents. On a PC this can be done by choosing Page Layout and then Page Color.
3. Play search games with words and letters that are confusing. For instance, if a young learner mixes up the letters b and d, provide a magazine, newspaper, or other print out and ask them to circle all the letter b's. They do not have to read the text. They will just be scanning for the letter or word. If you ask them to look across one line at a time, then you will also help them to improve tracking skills.
4. Locate some jokes on the internet or in a book. Review each joke and discuss what makes it amusing. Talk about words that have double meanings, and make a list of as many words that you can think of that have multiple meanings. Lastly, suggest that the learner makes his or her own joke book.
5. If spelling is a problem, go through the student's notebooks and handouts to uncover commonly misspelled words. Place each word on a single page, and have fun inventing memory strategies that will help the student recall the correct spelling. For example, if a student is having difficulty with the word "what," he or she may notice that the word "what" has the word "hat" in it. Then, they may draw hats on the page and then write down the question, "What hat?"
6. Play enjoyable, free internet games and watch videos that review basic phonics. Look at sites like Star Fall or Phonics Chant 2 and MagicE.

7. Integrate tactile and kinesthetic modalities into lessons to make them enjoyable and memorable. Form difficult letters, numbers, and words out of tactile manipulatives with the learner. You can use jelly beans, wet spaghetti, pebbles, raisins, pipe cleaners, a sand tray, shaving cream, clay, etc. You can also place difficult numbers, letters, and words on balloons, balls, and play games. Every time a player grabs hold of the ball or balloon, they read the first word that they see.
8. Read aloud or utilize books on tape. While listening, ask learners to close their eyes so they can picture the story in their mind. Many learners with reading disabilities never fully develop their ability to imagine or visualize a story, because the process of reading is so mentally taxing that they do not have the cognitive space to envision imagery. Helping these learners to develop the capacity to utilize their mind's eye will improve attention, reading comprehension, and memory. Another alternative is to have learners read along with the audio, so they can begin to observe whole words and phrases. An organization that offers a large selection of books on tape for students with reading disabilities is Learning Alley.
9. Create an enticing reading area. Fashion a fun name for this place, too, such as the "cozy corner." Together, decorate it and fill it with stuffed animals, pillows, blankets, and other soothing objects. You can make a tent out of sheets, hide a bean bag under an elevated table, or build it in a bay window or around a hammock. Have highlighters, colored pencils and paper, and a selection of books within reach.
10. Schedule a consistent time, a few times a week, when the whole class or family selects a book and reads. Everyone should gather and read in a common room. Make sure to provide yummy food, as well as comforting objects so that reading has pleasant associations. This is a time to unwind and take pleasure in the company of one another, so make this a treasured time.

If you are interested in purchasing some products that help students with reading disabilities, consider downloading a free sample of Dr. Warren's Reversing Reversals, Making Inferences the Fun and Easy Way, or Reading Games.

Dr. Erica Warren is a reading specialist, educational therapist, and author of multisensory and mindful educational materials. She resides in New York, where she works one-on-one with students as a “personal trainer for the brain” and as an educational consultant/teacher trainer. Dr. Warren offers her own materials at [Good Sensory Learning](#) and [Teachers Pay Teachers](#). You can also get free advice and resources by following her [blog here](#).

