

UNDERSTANDING DYSLEXIA

LEARNING SUPPORT ACTIVITIES • TEACHER RESOURCE

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that primarily affects reading, spelling, and written language. It is not related to intelligence, motivation, or effort. Students with dyslexia often have average or above-average intelligence and can be highly successful when provided with appropriate instructional supports. In the ASL classroom, understanding dyslexia helps teachers reduce barriers while maintaining high academic expectations.

What Is Dyslexia?

Dyslexia affects the way the brain processes written language. Students may have difficulty recognizing words accurately, reading fluently, spelling, or decoding unfamiliar words. Dyslexia exists on a continuum, and every student's strengths and support needs are unique.

What You May Notice in an ASL Classroom

- Difficulty reading English instructions or worksheets
- Slow reading or written responses
- Trouble spelling vocabulary words in English
- Stronger expressive skills than written language skills
- Frustration with reading-heavy assignments

Student Strengths

- Strong visual learning abilities
- Excellent problem-solving skills
- Creative thinking
- Strong verbal or signed communication skills
- Persistence and resilience

How Teachers Can Help

- Provide visual supports whenever possible.
- Read written directions aloud or sign them clearly.
- Break reading tasks into manageable sections.
- Allow additional time for reading and written work.
- Focus assessments on ASL knowledge rather than English reading ability when appropriate.

Things to Avoid

- Assuming dyslexia reflects low intelligence.
- Requiring excessive reading when it is not the learning objective.
- Penalizing spelling errors when assessing ASL concepts.
- Comparing students to one another.

★ Remember

Students with dyslexia are fully capable of learning American Sign Language. By reducing unnecessary reading barriers and providing accessible instruction, teachers help students demonstrate what they know while maintaining the same learning objectives.