

# Dyslexia Australia

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Website: [www.dyslexiasupport.com.au](http://www.dyslexiasupport.com.au)



## DEFINING DYSLEXIA

Let me start this article by quoting my esteemed colleague, Richard Whitehead, in the UK:

“In the early years of life, children are deeply trusting of the key adults around them and believe instantly what they say”

What a powerful and true statement.

I remember marvelling at my children taking their first steps at 8 ½ months, their first words followed by their first sentence. My oldest son picking up a hockey stick at 9 ½ months and accurately connecting with the ball. My youngest son understanding and using big words earlier than other children his age.

Prior to my children's' entry into school, my husband and I (and everyone within hearing distance) were in awe of their abilities, impressed with their achievements and glowing with pride.

My children, in turn, thrived on our smiles, cheering and positive recognitions of their abilities. Our children could feel our happiness, our delight and our pride gushing out. In other words, they are deeply trusting of the key adults around them and believe instantly what they said; and, I may add, how we felt.

Now let's imagine my child, your child and every other dyslexic child starting school deeply trusting the adults that we have surrounded them with. Our children who we have nurtured, guided and enthused over are now being labelled a slow learner or as having a learning disability. Our children are very smart and they pick up on the stress, the worry and more importantly, the words now used to describe them. They are “deeply trusting of the key adults around them and believe instantly what they say and feel.

My dyslexic 14 year old son said to me “Mom. If the government can recognise and fund gifted athletes and fund the Institute of Sports, why can't they do the same for us?” What can I say? My son has been surrounded by adults that are encouraging and proud of his gifts of dyslexia. My son in turn is deeply trusting of the key adults in his life.

Currently Australia has not adopted a definition for dyslexia. At the Forum I attended in Canberra this topic was briefly discussed and various “definitions” were put forward. All of these definitions used words such as problem, disability or disorder to described dyslexia.

Now is the opportunity to step up for our children and stop telling them, by action, inaction or DEFINITON, that they are disabled, have a disorder or are a problem.

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Now is the time to redefine dyslexia. Allowing a new positive definition is the opportunity to release the magic and move forward. I would like to start by putting forth 2 new definitions and 2 established definitions. Please vote for the definition you like.

1. Dyslexia is the capacity to differently process information, enabling innovative thought and perception. It is characterised by a visual and experiential learning style. With specific and alternative teaching methods dyslexics are able to realise this capability and minimise learning disabilities commonly developed by conventional teaching methods.
2. Dyslexia is a neurologically-based, often familial, disorder which interferes with the acquisition and processing of language. Varying in degrees of severity, it is manifested by difficulties in receptive and expressive language, including phonological processing, in reading, writing, spelling, handwriting, and sometimes in arithmetic. Dyslexia is not the result of lack of motivation, sensory impairment, inadequate instructional or environmental opportunities, or other limiting conditions, but may occur together with these conditions.  
Although dyslexia is lifelong, individuals with dyslexia frequently respond successfully to timely and appropriate intervention.
3. Dyslexia is a visual and experiential learning style that requires specific and alternative teaching methods in order to avoid learning disabilities and enhance abilities.
4. Dyslexia is a language-based learning disability of neurological origin. It primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling. It is frequently associated with difficulties in phonological processing. It occurs across the range of intellectual abilities with no distinct cut-off points. It is viewed as a lifelong disability that often does not respond as expected to best-practice evidence-based classroom methods for teaching reading.