



Why Home School a Dyslexic Child?

Dyslexic children require direct, systematic, and individualized instruction in reading and spelling. Public schools cannot always provide an adequate level of service. Indeed, some systems are woefully ill-prepared to deal with such children and may even deny, against all scientific evidence, that dyslexia exists. For many parents, an independent specialized boarding or day school is not an option. Some people live in rural areas away from learning centers, and long drives interfere with other family activities. Many children need daily remedial lessons which cannot be provided by learning centers or private tutors. Home schooling can provide solid remediation without the burden of travel and can allow the parent to see directly the progress of the child. Some parents may choose home tutoring in which the student attends his or her regular school but receives tutoring at home.

What are some of the challenges of home schooling a dyslexic child?

One challenge a parent may face is the relationship between teacher-parent and student-child. The student is required to reveal the disability at home, and the parent is required to maintain a supportive, yet disciplined approach. Knowing what to teach, the sequence of instruction, and the use of valid methods may require much research. Even many reading courses at the college level tend to be too general and too imprecise to offer guidance to teach dyslexics. The parent needs to become an expert on language and reading or find expert resources that can sustain a systematic

approach appropriate for the child. Providing social activities for the student and parent may also create a problem.

What are some of the benefits of home schooling?

The most obvious benefit is that home schooling allows for the necessary individualization in all subject areas, including reading, spelling, composition and comprehension. It allows students to focus on areas that interest them and allows parents to develop lessons based on those interests. Home-schooled children are free from measuring themselves against peers without learning differences. They can work at an individualized pace in a program which directly addresses unique needs. Home schooling may provide an alternative to the premium on speed, conformity, and rigid scheduling that may be emphasized by many more traditional educational settings. Home schooling for both dyslexic and non-dyslexic children allows for enriching experiences on a daily basis: cooking, music, field trips and hands-on learning. In many locations, home schooling parents have formed support groups so that home schooling experience becomes socially rewarding for students and parents. Many home schoolers argue that traditional schooling in a room of twenty to thirty students and one or two adults can be more socially isolating for a child than a home education program that makes good use of local resources.

How do I get started?

You must start the same way any good teacher, tutor or therapist would begin – with a thorough understanding of your child's reading, spelling, writing, and

comprehension abilities. You may wish to consult an educational psychologist to get a complete evaluation which can diagnose dyslexia. It is important to ask the tester to provide very specific recommendations. The report should include descriptions of the child's reading and spelling abilities and offer specific educational recommendations. Be aware that there is no magic bullet for dyslexia and that remediation is best achieved through structured direct language instruction. It is important to become familiar with state regulations pertaining to home schooling and to make solid connections with other home-schoolers before withdrawing the child from her regular school. Two excellent and comprehensive resources available on the internet are *Kaleidoscapes* (www.kaleidoscapes.com) and *The Homeschool Haven* (directory.homeschoolhaven.com). Rebecca Rupp's *Getting Started on Home Learning* (Three Rivers Press, New York, NY, 1999) is an excellent resource.

What are some of the things I should be doing?

Language remediation often requires daily spelling and oral reading. Spelling generally should move from the letter or syllable to word, phrase and sentence dictation during a single lesson. The lesson should include new words displaying a similar spelling pattern as well as review words and recently taught sight words. Techniques such as writing on a rough surface or in the air, clapping syllables, using cards to make words, arranging written syllables into words, and direct instruction

concerning mouth positions for language sounds provide a multisensory basis for learning. Students should read aloud on a daily basis from a book which they can read with relative accuracy. Before the students read aloud, they should review the passage and ask for help with words that may cause difficulty. Parents should select challenging words from the passage and explain their pronunciation and meaning before the student reads aloud. A warm-up reading of words and phrases on flashcards or from lists is often useful. Reading errors should be recorded to serve as a basis for future instruction. (See IDA fact-sheet 968 *Orton-Gillingham-Based and/or Multisensory Structured Language Approaches* for more information.)

There will be days....

There will be days when nothing seems to work right. The lesson goes slowly; the student is restless and perhaps bored. Education was not intended to take place in a single day. Give yourself and the student a break, and with the student, set meaningful goals for the next lesson.

No single form of education can meet the needs of every child; home schooling is, however, a viable and rewarding option for parents committed to securing an excellent education for their children

*IDA thanks Michael Minsky, a clinical teacher at The Greenwood Institute in Putney, VT, for the preparation of this fact sheet.
See the website at www.greenwoodinstitute.org for more information on The Greenwood Institute.*

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