# iDecide

# Pupils with Learning Difficulties

## Reading Problems (Misspelling Sounds)

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# Reading Problems (Misspelling Sounds)

## Classroom-based tips (focus on instructional methods)

1. **Develop the phonemic awareness of the pupils.** Use phoneme deletion, which refers to what word would be left if a sound were removed, e.g. if the /k/ sound were taken away from cat. Another way is word-to-word matching: Do the words "pen" and "pipe" begin with the same sound? A Greek language example is: Do the words "μάτι" and "μαχαίρι" begin with the same sound? This could be done as a game in which you can use printed images and ask pupils to categorise the images according to the first sound of the word. Phoneme counting also develops phonemic awareness, e.g.: How many sounds do you hear in the word cake? (Greek word example: λεμόνι, γάτα). Ask pupils to identify the Odd word out, e.g., which word starts with a different sound: bag, nine, beach, bike? (Greek word example: βροχή, βόλτα, δράκος, βγαίνω).

2. **Teach each letter-phoneme relationship explicitly**. For example, demonstrate to the pupils the letter m and say "this letter says /mmm/". Practice the new phoneme and other phonemes that they have already been taught for five minutes each day.

3. **Teach frequent, highly regular letter-sound relationships systematically**. For example if the first three letter-phoneme relationships the pupils learn are /a/, /b/, /c/ the only real word the pupils can read is cab. But if the first three letter-phoneme relationships are /m/, /a/, /s/, the pupils can read am, Sam, mass. (Greek word example: α/π/ι/τ the pupils can read παπί/ πίτα/πατάτα).

4. **Use interesting stories to develop language comprehension**. You should teach comprehension strategies and new vocabulary using orally presented stories. Read these stories to the pupils and discuss their meaning with them.

5. **Show pupils exactly how to sound out words**. Teach the pupils how to blend the sounds into words. Show them how to move from left to right through spellings as they sound out each word. Remember to practice blending words composed of only the letter-phoneme relationships the pupils have learned.

6. **Practice reading aloud.** Ask pupils to read aloud on a 1:1 (individual) setting first, if this is feasible, so as to provide verbal reinforcement and make the pupil feel more at ease to read aloud in the presence of others. In the event that the pupil appears to be uncomfortable to read in front of his/her classmates, try to gradually introduce them to this concept (i.e. by initially grouping the pupil with a classmate with whom he/she feels comfortable working with, then into smaller groups and eventually in front of the entire class). Do not ask pupils to read aloud unless they are comfortable doing so. Allow adequate time for pupils to read the words/information presented on the board. Avoid making sudden timetable or reading task changes. Do not expect them to learn strings of facts by heart, e.g. multiplication tables just from reading it aloud many times.

Source: Heward, W. L. (2013). Exceptional children: An introduction to special education. Pearson College Div.

## School-based practical tips (focus on instructional methods)

### Curricular Adaptations

1. **Arrange co-teaching activities among colleagues** that may be able to assist individual teachers in implementing additional activities/methods to further support their teaching. Invite researchers or educational psychologists to conduct clinical observations and provide feedback, including suggestions on support strategies.

2. **Make specific adaptations to the material given to these pupils.** For example:
   - Use a plain, evenly spaced sans serif font such as Arial and Comic Sans
   - Use cream or soft- pastel- coloured paper instead of white paper to print the activities given to the pupils). (Hall, Meyer and Rose, 2012).

3. **Make curricular adaptations in terms of differentiating to the task.** Ensure that you inform teachers to make necessary adaptations to the tasks based on individual learning objectives in the curriculum and in response to the various learning needs of the pupils and the severity of the case (Hall, Meyer and Rose, 2012).

4. **Make curricular adaptations in terms of resources.** If feasible, equip the classrooms in which there are pupils exhibiting specific learning difficulties with different and adapted materials and advanced technology, such as tablets or projectors, so as to attain a single learning outcome. (BDA, 2012)

### Other (External Expertise)

**Provide training for teachers and SEN teachers from external agencies like educational psychologist services and dyslexia organisations, related to pupils' main areas of difficulty.** They can also advise on the signs for early identification and assessment, and practical tips for the teachers in order to support those pupils in the class (Armstrong & Squires, 2014).

### Parents / Parents' Associations

Arrange regular meetings between the parents and the staff to discuss pupils' progress and to enhance the home-school collaboration. This will help to monitor progress and to discuss other issues related to the social-emotional needs of the pupil, such as, social skills, social interactions with peers and adults within the school setting, marginalisation, behaviour at home, special areas of interest, and self-esteem.

## School Purchases

**Make curricular adaptations in terms of resources.** If feasible, equip the classrooms in which there are pupils exhibiting specific learning difficulties with different and adapted materials and advanced technology, such as tablets or projectors, so as to attain a single learning outcome. (BDA, 2012)

## Pupil Support

1. Where possible, provide additional class support, such as the presence of a teaching assistant, for pupils presenting with reading problems to keep them on track (BDA, 2012).

2. **Arrange regular meetings between the parents and the staff to discuss pupils' progress and to enhance the home-school collaboration.** This will help to monitor progress and to discuss other issues related to the social-emotional needs of the pupil, such as, social skills, social interactions with peers and adults within the school setting, marginalisation, behaviour at home, special areas of interest, and self-esteem.

## Teacher Professional Development

1. **Provide training for teachers and SEN teachers from external agencies like educational psychologist services and dyslexia organisations, related to pupils' main areas of difficulty.** They can also advise on the signs for early identification and assessment, and practical tips for the teachers in order to support those pupils in the class (Armstrong & Squires, 2014).

2. **Arrange co-teaching activities among colleagues** that may be able to assist individual teachers in implementing additional activities/methods to further support their teaching. Invite researchers or educational psychologists to conduct clinical observations and provide feedback, including suggestions on support strategies.

3. **Invest in ongoing training in the form of workshops and seminars provided by educational professionals or educational psychologists** on aspects of differentiated teaching and strategies that may better assist the needs of pupils presenting with specific learning difficulties. (Rose review, 2009)

## Technology

**Make curricular adaptations in terms of resources.** If feasible, equip the classrooms in which there are pupils exhibiting specific learning difficulties with different and adapted materials and advanced technology, such as tablets or projectors, so as to attain a single learning outcome. (BDA, 2012)

## Supportive Literature

**Definition:** Difficulty with reading is by far the most common characteristic of pupils with learning disabilities. Reading problems of pupils with learning disabilities include difficulty at the word level of processing, for example, inability to accurately and fluently decode single words. Additionally, these pupils present with deficits in the area of phonological awareness of spoken words (Torgesen and Wagner, 1998). Phonological awareness refers to the "conscious understanding and knowledge that language is made up of sounds" (Simmons, Kame'nui, Coyne, Chard & Hairrell, 2011, p. 54).

**The pupil that faces reading difficulties may exhibit the following characteristics:**

- Makes poor reading progress
- Finds it difficult to blend letters together into words
- Is hesitant in reading, especially when reading aloud
- Misses out words/lines when reading, or adds extra words
- Has difficulty picking out the most important points from a passage (comprehension difficulties)

A great majority of pupils who experience difficulties representative of a specific learning disability also experience difficulties related to reading and literacy skills.

## Websites and EU Reports

Phonological Awareness Organisation, Available at: http://www.phonologicalawareness.org/
Multisensory instruction: https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/partnering-with-childs-school/instructional-strategies/multisensory-instruction-what-you-need-to-know
Dyslexia friendly pack (DFA), British Dyslexia Association (2012): http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/common/ckeditor/filemanager/userfiles/Educator/Resources/dfs-gpg-abridged.pdf
Methods of Differentiation in classrooms http://www.bbcactive.com/BBCActiveIdeasandResources/MethodsofDifferentiationintheClassroom.aspx

### References

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Simmons, D.C, Kame'enui, E.J, Coyne, M.D., Chard, D.J & Hairrell, A. (2011) Effective strategies for teaching beginning reading. In M.D. Coyne, E.J. Kame'enui, D.W Carnine (Eds.), Effective teaching strategies that accommodate diverse learners (4th ed., pp. 51-84). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson

Torgesen, J. K., & Wagner, R. K. (1998). Alternative diagnostic approaches for specific developmental reading disabilities. Learning Disabilities Research & Practice.

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