

Dyslexia, a Reading Disability

Dyslexia: a reading disability...but not a life sentence. Dyslexia is a condition in which an individual has difficulty acquiring the basic language skills, which are necessary to learn how to read, spell, and write. Science has shown that the part of the brain that is integral to reading functions differently in those with dyslexia, the major problem being that dyslexics cannot identify the approximately 44 letter sounds and link them to their alphabetic symbols. Dyslexics may even hear language as a blur of sounds; much like a nearsighted person looks at a tree and sees a blur of green rather than individual leaves.

When children learn to read, they must first become aware that spoken words consist of pieces of sound. Next, they must learn that the letters of the alphabet are the way that we represent these sounds on paper. The majority of children learn this without direct instruction, but the dyslexic does not. A person with dyslexia needs to be explicitly taught what the rest of us take for granted and learn automatically.

The following are some of the most common characteristics of dyslexia: letter, word, and number reversals, substitutions, and omissions; the lack of recognition of words previously learned; bizarre spelling; confusion of left and right; difficulty carrying out a sequence of directions; poor reading comprehension; and difficulty organizing and completing written projects. Although many children display one or more characteristics while first acquiring the basic reading skills, most will outgrow them. The child with dyslexia, however, will not.

A substantial number of children with dyslexia (as well as with other reading disabilities) come to our Centers looking for solutions to their reading problems. Fortunately, whether their reading disability is mild or severe, Kumon can help them. What does Kumon do for children who have dyslexia? It provides them with the structured and balanced approach to reading instruction, which they need in order to move in baby steps through practice and repetition toward their ultimate goal – reading.

Here is an outline of the program, which Kumon offers:

1. Kumon Worksheets, along with Sight Word Flashcards, build vocabulary.
2. Kumon Worksheets, CD's and Rhyming Flashcards help children learn to hear the differences in sound so that they can master phonics.
3. Kumon's Recommended Reading List of award-winning authors and illustrators immerse children into a world of compelling literature, developing their love of books, and their awareness of the written word.
4. Kumon's Reading Program includes a language arts component that teaches both grammar and punctuation.
5. Kumon methodology provides dyslexic children the practice and repetition of the basic reading skills, which they require.
6. Finally, Kumon individualizes its program for each and every student easily accommodating the child with dyslexia (or any other reading disability).

If parents know that their child has dyslexia, they should inform their Kumon Instructor so that an individualized course of study can be created accordingly – that is, one that moves in small incremental steps with lots of repetition and special attention paid to rhyming, phonemic awareness and later phonics. We know that the best time to help children to improve their reading skills are during the early primary grades; thus, it is also a perfect time for the child to study Kumon. The earlier the intervention, the better the improvement. Remember, reading skills can be improved and Kumon is the place to do this.

If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions about this topic, please contact me at mr.jose@kumonofgilbert.com.

Note from the editor:

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