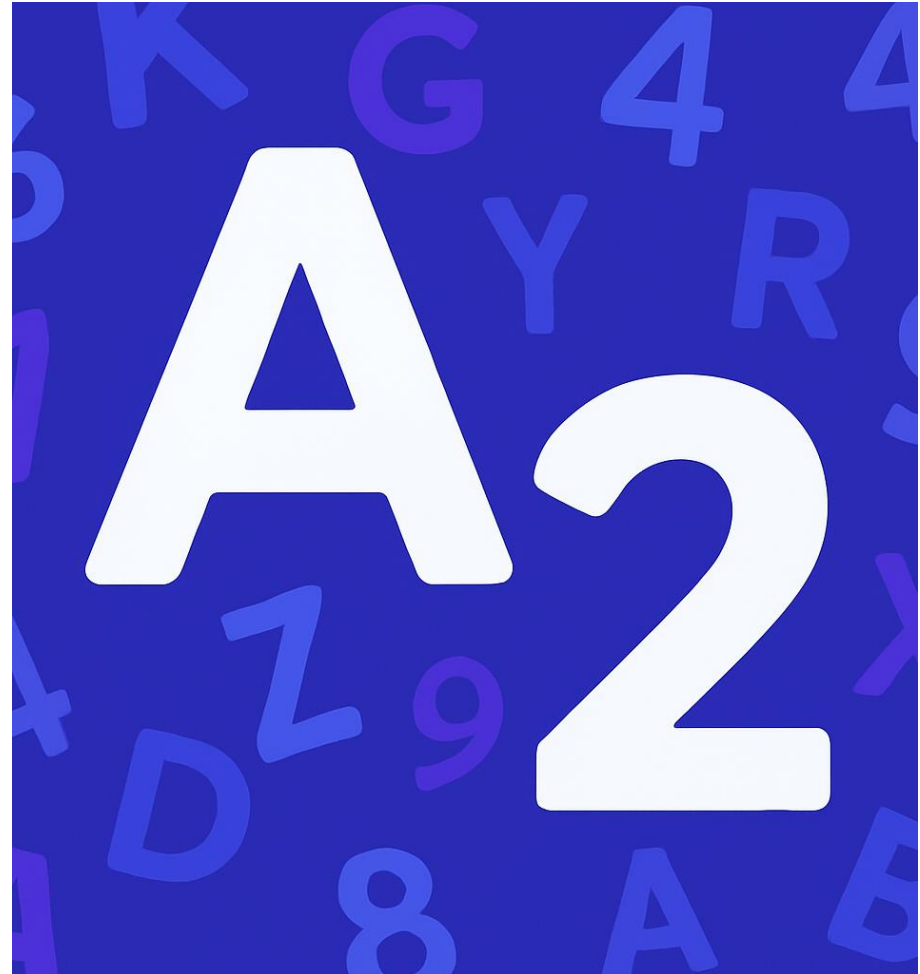


Recognizing Dyslexia in Adults -

and How to Talk About It

Introduction

- Dyslexia is often associated with children, but many adults live with undiagnosed dyslexia.
- Identifying the signs can lead to better self-awareness and open new opportunities in learning and at work.
- Many adults have developed coping strategies that mask their difficulties, making recognition more challenging.



- Raising awareness of adult dyslexia helps reduce stigma and promotes access to appropriate support.
- Early recognition and the right tools can empower adults to unlock their full potential.



What is Dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty that impacts reading, writing, and spelling skills. It is not linked to intelligence or problems with vision or hearing. Its roots lie in the way the brain processes language.

Definition (IDA, 2002)

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.



Prevalence in Adults

In adults, dyslexia is estimated to affect roughly 5–10% of the population.

Many have learned strategies over time that can hide or reduce the visible signs of this difficulty.

Dyslexia often remains undiagnosed in adulthood, meaning the actual number may be higher than reported.

Prevalence rates can vary depending on language, educational background, and the tools used for assessment



Why Dyslexia Often Goes Undiagnosed



In school, dyslexia was often misunderstood or simply overlooked.



Many students were unfairly labeled as lazy or careless.



In the past, there was little awareness of dyslexia among teachers and employers

DYSLEXIA

Common Signs in Adults

Common signs in adults include difficulty reading with speed or accuracy, challenges with spelling, and frequent writing mistakes.

Writing may be noticeably slow, and remembering written instructions can also be a struggle.

Additional Signs

Additional signs may include avoiding tasks that require reading or writing, difficulties with time management or staying organized, memory challenges – especially with remembering sequences – and low self-esteem linked to reading and writing skills.

Dyslexia in workplace

Dyslexia in workplace

Dyslexia can make tasks such as note-taking, writing reports, or reading instructions more challenging.

Adults with dyslexia may struggle with executive functions such as time management, prioritizing tasks, and meeting tight deadlines

Difficulties with reading lengthy or technical documents can slow down workflow and require extra support or tools

Many individuals bring strong visual thinking, strategic planning, and teamwork skills that enrich the workplace

Many individuals also excel in areas like problem-solving, creativity, and verbal communication.



Barriers to Recognition

- Shame or fear of stigma can prevent adults from seeking support.
- Limited understanding of adult dyslexia among educators, employers, and society can delay recognition.
- The lasting impact of negative school experiences may discourage adults from revisiting learning challenges.
- A lack of accessible screening and assessment opportunities can make identification more difficult.
- Misconceptions that dyslexia only affects children can further contribute to under-recognition in adulthood.



Conversation and Meeting the Adult



How to Start the Conversation

- Choose a private and supportive environment to ensure comfort and trust.
- Speak in a non-judgmental way and avoid attaching labels.
- Focus on the specific challenges you have noticed rather than making general assumptions.
- Use clear and empathetic language that encourages dialogue.
- Give space for the person to respond and share their own perspective.
- Emphasize strengths as well as challenges to keep the conversation balanced and positive

Suggested Phrases

- “I’ve noticed that reading instructions can sometimes be frustrating for you – has that been the case for a long time?”
- “You express yourself really well when speaking – do you feel your writing shows your ideas just as clearly?”
- “Would you be interested in exploring ways to make reading and writing a bit easier?”
- “You express yourself really well when speaking – would you like to see how speech-to-text software could turn your words into written text instantly?”
- “Would you be interested in exploring tools that can summarize long texts to make reading easier?”
- “There are AI apps that can help with spelling and grammar – should I show you how one works on your writing?”



Responding with Empathy

Respond with empathy by acknowledging their experiences, highlighting their strengths and potential, and offering practical resources and support.

Reactions You Might Encounter

Possible reactions include feelings of relief and recognition, but also shame, embarrassment, or even resistance and denial.



**Workplace
opportunities and
the use of assistive
reading and writing
tools**



When and How to Refer

If the person is open to it, suggest a formal assessment and share information about relevant local or online resources.

Be sure to follow up with empathy and patience.

Encourage the individual to explore support groups or networks for adults with dyslexia.

Provide information about workplace accommodations and assistive technologies that may be available.

Emphasize that seeking further assessment or support is a strength, not a weakness.

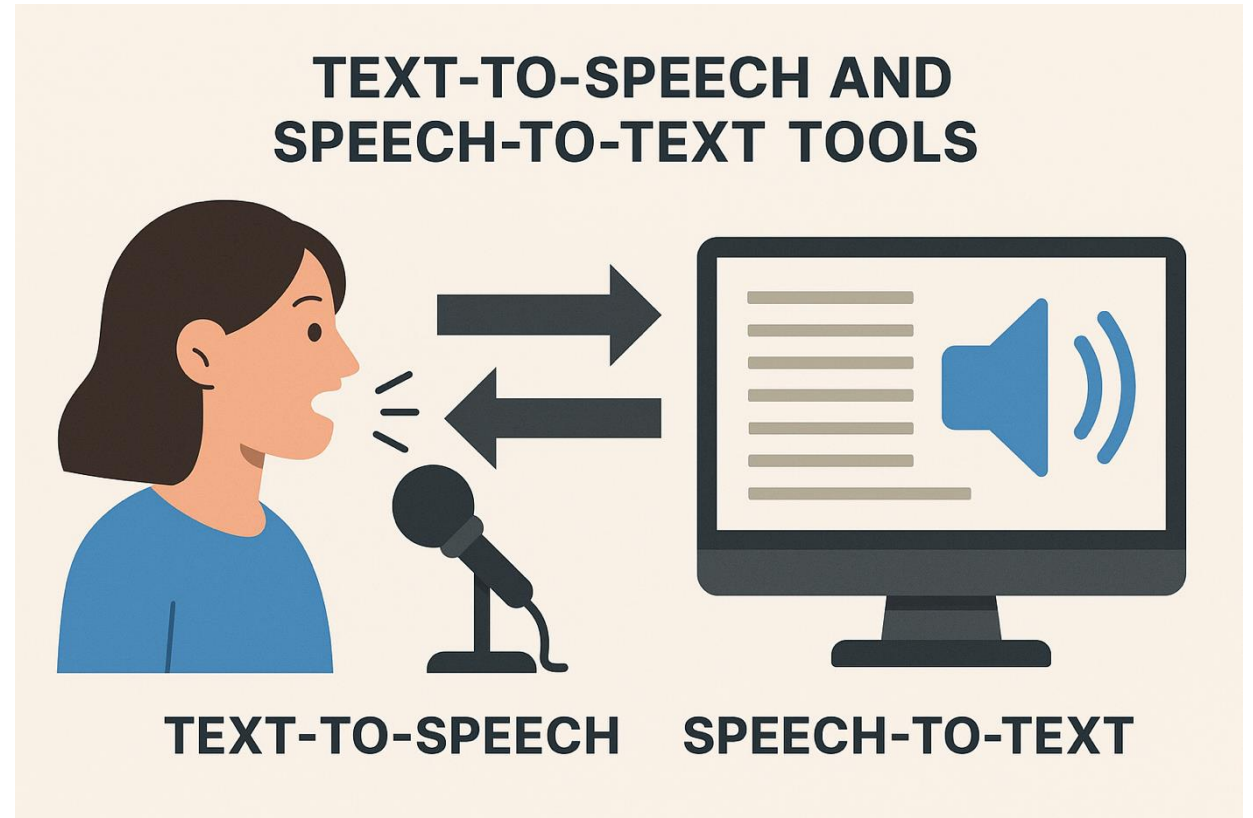
Practical options

- Text-to-speech software to support reading and comprehension.
- Speech-to-text tools that help transform spoken words into written text.
- Workplace adjustments, such as flexible deadlines or alternative formats for instructions.
- Adult literacy programs that strengthen core reading and writing skills.
- AI-based solutions that provide grammar support, text simplification, and instant feedback.
- Organizational tools such as digital calendars, reminders, and task management apps.
- Access to supportive peer networks or mentoring programs.



Text-to-Speech and Speech-to-Text Tools

- Text-to-Speech (TTS) software such as NaturalReader, Read&Write, Microsoft Immersive Reader, and Voice Dream Reader can read digital text aloud to enhance comprehension.
- Speech-to-Text tools like Microsoft Dictate, Otter.ai, and Google Voice Typing help convert spoken words into written text, reducing writing barriers.
- Example: An employee with dyslexia uses Immersive Reader to review reports and Microsoft Dictate to draft emails by voice.



Workplace Adjustments

- Flexible deadlines and alternative communication formats (e.g., visual guides or audio explanations) can reduce stress and improve productivity.
- Example: A manager records short instruction videos in Microsoft Stream instead of providing written manuals for employees with reading challenges.



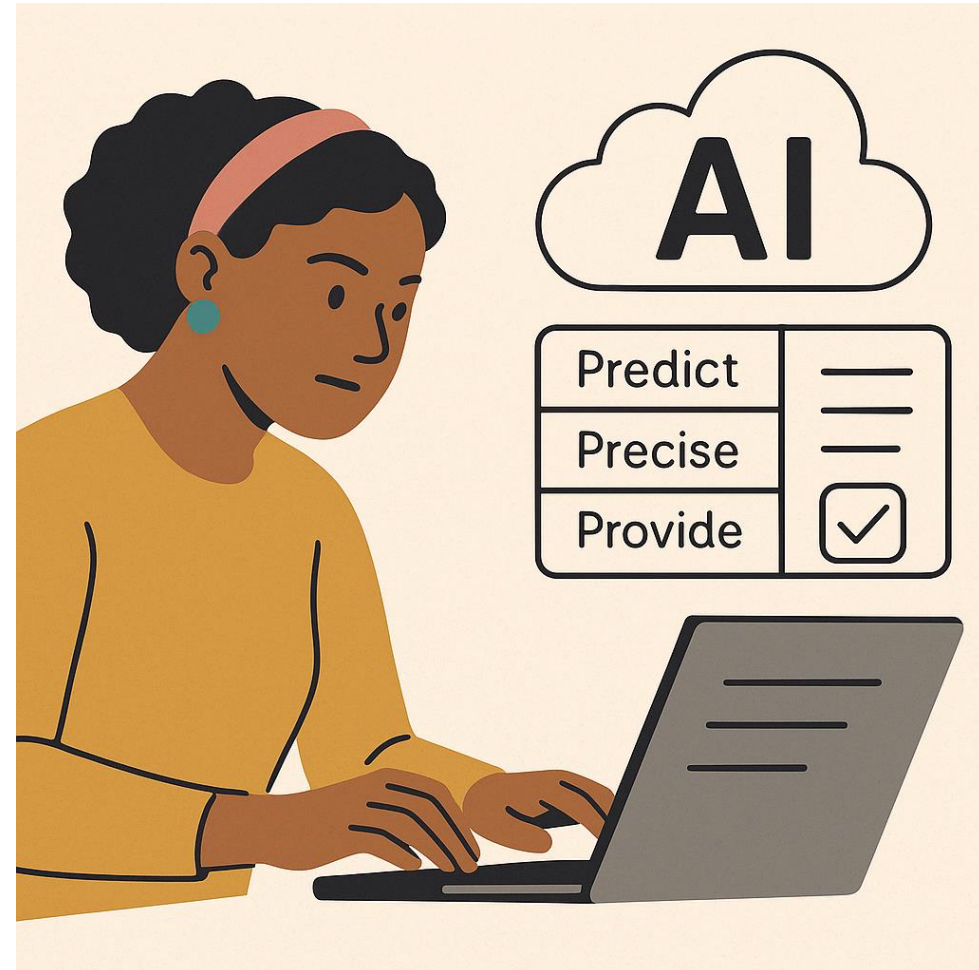
Adult Literacy and Skill-Building Programs

- Adult education programs across Europe, offered by community learning centers or vocational schools, help strengthen reading and writing foundations.
- Online learning platforms such as Microsoft Learn, Coursera, and Khan Academy provide flexible, self-paced opportunities for literacy improvement.
- Example: An adult learner joins an evening literacy program to improve professional communication and digital competence.



AI-Based and Word Prediction Tools

- AI tools such as Grammarly, Quillbot, ChatGPT, and Microsoft Editor provide grammar correction, text simplification, and real-time feedback.
- These tools can also summarize and rephrase long or complex texts into shorter, clearer language, supporting reading comprehension.
- Word prediction software like IntoWords, AppWriter, and Microsoft Editor suggests words and phrases to support writing fluency.
- Example: A university student uses ChatGPT to simplify long academic texts and IntoWords to assist in writing essays.



Organizational and Peer Support Tools

- Digital calendars, reminders, and task management apps such as Microsoft Outlook, To Do, Trello, and Notion help structure time and tasks.
- Peer networks, mentoring programs, and Microsoft Teams groups promote collaboration, accountability, and shared learning.
- Example: A European mentoring network uses Teams to connect employees across countries for professional development and ongoing support.



Final Thoughts

- Dyslexia in adults is both real and manageable.
- Recognizing it can be the first step towards empowerment.
- Approaching the topic with kindness and respect can make a meaningful difference.
- With the right tools and strategies, adults with dyslexia can thrive both personally and professionally.
- Raising awareness helps reduce stigma and fosters more inclusive workplaces and communities.



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