

First Grade Struggling Reader | 1st Grader to Struggling Read

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Struggling Readers

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“1 in 5 kids in the U.S. struggle with issues related to reading, writing, math, focus and organization. These kids with learning issues are as smart as their peers, but too many aren’t getting the support they need to succeed.”

– National Centers for Learning Disabilities

Is My Child Just a “Late” Reader?

ARTICLE: Understanding the Difference Between a ‘Late’ Reader and a Child with a Learning Issue
by Laura Lambert

ARTICLE: Parent-Tested, Expert-Recommended Advice for When Your Child Isn’t Reading Yet

Warning Signs of a Child Who is Struggling With Reading

- Has not been able to master letters and sounds, despite practicing at home and school
- Cannot sound out or blend sounds, shows intense frustration or avoidance when asked to try
- Cannot rhyme words
- After repeatedly practicing sight words, they cannot recall them or commit them to memory
- When trying to read, they make guesses that don’t resemble the word on the page
- Child appears to “hate” reading and avoids practicing
- By the end of 1st grade, your child’s writing does not match words in any way to the sounds of the actual words. The word “dog” might be spelled “dxtsi”.
- There are members of the family that also describe having extreme difficulty with reading
- Your child was a “late talker” as a toddler

It is estimated that as much as 20% of the population experiences some reading disability. When children are in 1st grade, it can be difficult to tease out if they will eventually catch on or if they are truly facing a disability. There are some telltale signs that a trained educator or specialist can detect.

Some students have not had effective reading instruction. Other children have not had adequate exposure to reading before 1st grade, while others may have a reading disability, such as dyslexia, which makes reading very challenging. There are some children who face all of these scenarios combined! The good news is that children can overcome their difficulties with the right support from trained educators and specialists. Reading disabilities are not related to a child’s intelligence.

No matter what issue your child is facing, they will require excellent reading instruction from a teacher with extensive knowledge and a deep understanding of how to teach reading. Many parents also pursue tutoring from a trained tutor in multi-sensory reading instruction, such as the Orton-Gillingham method.

Seeing your child struggle and suffer can be difficult for families to experience. It can also affect a child's self-esteem when they witness classmates reading confidently. If you are worried, don't delay in your search for answers.

Guidelines for Concerned Parents

Be a Relentless Advocate

Advocate for your child, try to pinpoint the exact reading problems your child is facing. Tell your pediatrician how you see your child struggling. Ask for an appointment with your child's teacher and voice your concerns. The research is very clear about what to look for and parents should not wait until 2nd or 3rd grade to ask for help. You have a right to ask for an educational evaluation at any time from your public school. If you would like to take more urgent action, contact a local experienced clinical psychologist who can administer a learning disability evaluation. Ask your pediatrician for a recommendation.

Keep Reading Continue to build their reading skills with patience.

Don't stop reading aloud to your child because you see them struggling on their own. Storytelling is central to human existence, just because they are grappling with the mechanics, they still need the pleasure and experience of being immersed in a good book.

Their Strengths Define Them

Focus and highlight your child's strengths so they know they are more than their reading difficulties. Your child needs to know that you believe in them.

Get Help Sooner than Later

Be wary of holding your child back; waiting another year will only put off needed help. Unlike other normal childhood stages, learning to read is not going to be a "natural" activity for many children. The window for learning to read is critical in the Kindergarten to 2nd grade years, and the sooner you can get help and resources for your child, the more success they will begin to experience.

Finding answers to your concerns will provide relief and allow you to approach helping your child with a renewed sense of hope for their reading.