

# STEALTH DYSLEXIA

People with stealth dyslexia have problems sounding out (or decoding) words just like those with "classic" dyslexia, yet typically their scores on tests where reading comprehension is measured are typically above average, or even quite strong.

## BASIC FACTS

- Term coined in 2005
- Typically under-perform based on their intellectual potential in the classroom
- Typically are overlooked by teachers and parents because they perform so well on reading comprehension measurements so they "avoid the radar"
- Belief is because they perform well on reading comprehension measurements they cannot possibly be dyslexic
- They show the most classic feature of dyslexia, they struggle with phonics and decoding
- fMRI scans performed by Fumiko Hoeft show the brains of those with stealth dyslexia indeed show the classic features of dyslexia
- When they read they have heightened activity in parts of the brain that help with executive function and self-control
- Their comprehension appears strong because they compensate for their decoding problems by using their attention and problem-solving skills in active ways
- Often struggle in school
- Following skills are particularly challenging:
  - Reading new (and especially long words)
  - Reading out loud
  - Silent reading speed and accuracy
  - Spelling
  - Writing (both mechanics and the speed and quantity of output)

## FLYING UNDER THE RADAR

- School challenges typically only become clear once the work load becomes heavy or complex
  - They can no longer keep up by increasing their effort
  - Often this occurs in high school or college
- Many struggle with writing, but their reading challenges are missed so typically they're only diagnosed with dysgraphia at a young age
- ADHD diagnoses are often common because they make lots of "silly mistakes," but as Hoeft has shown in her research, they typically have strong focus and attention

## TO LEARN MORE

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## STRUGGLES WITH COMPLEX TASKS

- Because of their problems with the basic skills listed here, they often have a hard time with more complex tasks, such as
  - Reading short passages (where they cannot use context to guess words they cannot sound out
    - For example, questions and answers on multiple choice tests or story problems in math
  - Reading passages on an unfamiliar topics where they cannot use their background knowledge to guess the words they cannot sound out.
  - Reading passages that contain many unfamiliar words or new terms, especially in the natural and social sciences, or subjects with foreign cultures or languages
  - Keeping up with lengthy reading or writing assignments

## REQUIRED SUPPORTS

- Because of their challenges they may require the same supports as other dyslexic students:
  - Instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics, where progress is based on decoding ability, not comprehension
  - Text-to-speech readers, especially for long reading assignments
  - A good keyboarding program to help with spelling and writing
  - Extra time on tests
  - Individualized expectations for writing

## THE MORE YOU KNOW

- While they may struggle in school, they are typically extremely good thinkers and problem solvers
- Often do very well as adults
- Remember that when you see a bright student who understands MOST of what he or she reads, but still struggles with oral reading, sounding out new long words, spelling and often writing, think about **stealth dyslexia**

Source: <https://www.understood.org/en/community-events/blogs/the-inside-track/2015/03/04/stealth-dyslexia-how-some-dyslexic-students-escape-detection>