



# Dyslexia

by  
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## Dyslexia

*dys-* is a prefix borrowed from Greek and means 'bad, abnormal, impaired'. *Lexia* comes from Greek *légein* 'to speak'. The word *dyslexia* entered English in the late 1880s.

We are charmed by the way toddlers wobble their way through words in their early stages of speech. Eager attempts to mimic the sounds often result in words that remain with us for years. In literature, A A Milne gave us the 'Heffalump' (elephant) in *Winnie the Pooh*.

When the wobble with words becomes a persistent problem in learning to read, it takes on a more serious tone. For many children, finding their way through English phonics and spelling is a nightmare. And no wonder. English presents readers with challenges that are not so difficult in many other languages.

Imagine yourself trying to come to grips with Chinese characters or the Greek alphabet today. You will soon discover what it is like to be a beginning reader.

Then consider the English alphabet with the letters *a*, *b*, *d*, *p* and *q*, and you can understand a child's confusion. Era's recently developed WINGS font shows the letter *q* as *q*. The use of other distinguishing features such as the hook on the *q* help children to

distinguish between confusing letter shapes.

Dyslexia is the most commonly recognised form of reading disorder. It is now better understood through research over many years. It is a mistake to associate this disorder with lack of intelligence. Children with normal or above-average intelligence can be affected by it.

I was recently approached by parents in Norway who said that they had dyslexia as children. The effects of dyslexia can be longstanding. Too often these children grow up thinking themselves 'dumb', when in fact they are not. The Norwegian parents addressed me very capably – in English.

Winnie the Pooh might have been 'a bear of little brain', but he had an amazing effect on generations of children who later discovered that character is what really matters. The difficulties with reading can be overcome with the right methods to break the dyslexic spell.

The 2015 Australian Children's Laureate claims she was dyslexic... and there's nothing 'bad, abnormal or impaired' about that famous author and speaker!