A child might be diagnosed with a reading disorder if his or her ability to sound out words, recognize sight words, or comprehend reading is below his or her general abilities or IQ. Sometimes, this is called dyslexia. In school, or in an assessment, the term “reading disorder” will more likely be used to refer to the same thing.

Why it Matters: Having difficulty with reading can make school very hard, especially as children grow older. After third grade, instead of learning to read, children are expected to read to learn. Difficulties with reading can make it very difficult for children to participate and learn in language arts and English classes, and also in math, social studies, science, etc. Even math sheets require one to read instructions!

How It is Diagnosed: If a reading disorder is suspected, a child will be given either a psychoeducational assessment or neuropsychological assessment. Sometimes children are tested by a professional at school, and at other times children are tested by a professional outside of school. In order to determine if the child has a reading disorder, the child’s general abilities or intelligence will be tested. These tests, sometimes called “IQ tests,” compare a child’s performance to others his or her same age. The child’s reading ability will also be evaluated. When there is a large gap between a child’s cognitive ability (as measured by the IQ test) and his or her ability to read, and this gap is not explained by other factors such as attention or language, the child might be diagnosed with a reading disorder.

Treatment: There are different kinds of treatments for reading disorders. If your child has a reading disorder, the type of treatment your child will need will depend on his or her particular strengths and weaknesses. For example, treatment suggestions for children with phonological processing difficulties (they cannot sound out words) might include a multi-sensory approach, such as the Wilson Reading System, Orton-Gillingham Training Program, or Lindamood-Bell Reading and Comprehension Program. For other children, a different approach might be more helpful.

Related Articles:

- CO-OCCURRING CONDITIONS AND CO-MORBIDITIES
• MATH DISORDERS
• DISORDERS OF WRITTEN EXPRESSION

Additional Resources:

• WILSON READING SYSTEM
• ORTON-GILLINGHAM TRAINING PROGRAM
• LINDAMOOD-BELL READING AND COMPREHENSION PROGRAM

The Center for Autism Research and The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia do not endorse or recommend any specific person or organization or form of treatment. The information included within the CAR Autism Roadmap™ and CAR Resource Directory™ should not be considered medical advice and should serve only as a guide to resources publicly and privately available. Choosing a treatment, course of action, and/or a resource is a personal decision, which should take into account each individual's and family's particular circumstances.