

What is Double Dyslexia?

“Double dyslexia” is not an official diagnostic term, but educators and researchers use it to describe the most profound form of dyslexia, where a child has TWO types of reading deficits. This is sometimes called the Dual Deficit Hypothesis.

1. What It Means

- Weakness in phonological processing (trouble connecting sounds to letters)
- Weakness in rapid naming/processing speed (trouble quickly naming letters, numbers, or colors)

When BOTH are present, a child is considered to have “double dyslexia,” often resulting in the most severe reading difficulties.

2. Key Characteristics

- Extreme difficulty decoding words despite years of instruction
- Very slow reading rate, even when accuracy improves
- Poor spelling and written expression
- Struggles with subjects that require reading (math word problems, directions, note-taking)
- Emotional toll: higher risk of anxiety, depression, school refusal
- Lifelong impact: may never test at grade-level, even after strong interventions

3. Why It Matters

Students with double dyslexia need the MOST intensive support:

- Daily 1:1 or very small group evidence-based intervention (Wilson, Barton, Orton-Gillingham)
- Extended School Year (ESY) to prevent regression
- Progress measured by a body of evidence (lesson mastery, fluency, observed skills), not just standardized tests

4. The Most Profound Form

- Dual deficits = slowest progress without proper instruction
- Requires years of structured literacy instruction
- Continued support into middle and high school
- Reading may improve, but fluency and writing remain challenges

With the right instruction, children with double dyslexia CAN learn to read, but they need more time, more intensity, and strong IEP protections.