

Dyslexia is the current buzzword in the education world, and because it's Dyslexia Awareness Month, I'd like to give parents a few multi-sensory strategies to use with your struggling reader.

One in 5 people may have mild to moderate dyslexia or dyslexic tendencies. It's a way the brain manipulates words when students look at them.

Orton Gillingham, the leading multi-sensory company and our Phonics First curriculum which was adapted from OG, use multi-sensory strategies to help the correct side of students' brains read the words.

Please watch the video "What is Dyslexia" found on YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zafiGBrFkRM>

VERY helpful website with dyslexia resources from our county. Scroll all the way to the bottom.

MOST resources will come from the parent section. <http://www.shelbyed.k12.al.us/dyslexia.html>

Strategies for **Phonics** words only: (refer to the videos)

1. **Pound Tap Pound:** Student hears the word, pounds word on table with the fist, puts dominant hand on the table and sets it up like a spider, so that the wrist is not resting on the table. Student pound the syllables in a word, and finger-tap the sounds.

Tell student the word like "mop". They pound and say the word, tap it out from left to write as they sound out the word, pound the word and say it after.

2. **Blending words:** brainspring.com multisensory phonics card pack. These are very helpful for students to blend words together. (See blending board video.)

<https://brainspring.com/brainspring-store/phonics-first-classroom-card-pack-with-key-word-stickers/>

3. **Sand Writing:** I got a plastic plate from Dollar Tree and some colorful sand to pour in the plate. For each of the vowels and letters students write the letter with their dominant hand pointer finger while saying it and underlining it 3 times. From the multisensory card pack mentioned above, there are 2 and 3 letter blends that make one sound. Student count the 2 or 3 letter blends as one sound so for "bl" or "sn" the students would say "bl says /bl/" as they write "bl" with their finger in the sand.

4. **Bananagrams Building Words:** I get Bananagrams from Walmart and use the tiles (quicker than writing the letters on a flash card, one letter per card). Based on the phonics pattern (like short vowel words) I say the word like "mud" we pound, tap, pound, and then students find the letters to make the word "mud." (This is an unofficial strategy, it's derived from the more formally named strategy called Elkonin boxes.)

Strategies for Red Words (sight words) only that CAN NOT be sounded out: (refer to the videos)

1. Initially I have my **flashcards** with the sight words (also called red words) that they need to know. If a student does not recognize the sight word, do NOT tell them to sound it out. It's better just to tell them the word and continue reviewing it.
2. **Arm tapping:** To review red words: students may hold out their arm and use their dominant hand to tap out and spell the word from left to right across their arm. For example, if they are right handed, they will hold out their left arm and tap from shoulder to the wrist spelling the word as they tap, and then sweeping the arm saying the whole word after they spell and tap it out so if the word is "what", they would tap down their arm: "w-h-a-t, what." (If they are left-handed, they will tap on their right arm from the wrist up to their shoulder and swipe from the wrist up.)
3. **Red words on the screen:** You can get a screen at hobby lobby and have students get a red crayon. Tell them the sight word, like "what" and they will spell it out loud as they write it "w-h-a-t" in the red crayon. (It helps their brain remember if it's written in a red crayon.) Then, students will trace the red letters in the word and say them as they trace them with the pointer finger of the hand they write with 3 times. Only do this with sight words, not phonics words.

Remember, sight red words are words that students need to know automatically. These are different than phonics words. Some red words may fit a phonics pattern that we haven't taught yet, but they need to go ahead and know the word automatically at the beginning of the year.