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Understanding Dyslexia + Inclusive Supports

What is Dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a common variation in the way the brain processes language. It is neurological in origin and primarily affects the way individuals recognize words, connect sounds to letters, and spell. These differences are not a reflection of intelligence or effort, but rather of natural diversity in how people learn. Visit www.understood.org/dyslexia for more information and supports.

Key Features of Dyslexia

1. Differences in identifying and working with sounds in language (phonological awareness)
2. Differences in connecting sounds to letters (spelling and encoding)
3. Variations in accurate and/or fluent word recognition (decoding and fluency)

Inclusive Supports for Learners with Dyslexia

Accommodation Area	Examples of Inclusive Supports
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to audiobooks or text-to-speech software • Additional time for reading assignments • Quiet or low-distraction reading environment • Opportunities to preview reading materials in advance
Spelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjusted spelling lists with focus on patterns or phonetic skills • Access to spellcheck or word prediction software • Emphasis on ideas and communication rather than spelling accuracy
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of speech-to-text software or a scribe when helpful • Access to graphic organizers and written copies of notes • Flexibility to type or record responses instead of handwriting • Grading that prioritizes content and creativity over mechanics
Math	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of calculators, math tables, and manipulatives • Access to graph paper or scrap paper for organization • Highlighting key operations and providing regular feedback
Homework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced or prioritized homework load • Option to type or dictate responses • Written or electronic copies of assignment lists
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended time and quiet or flexible testing environments • Option for directions or questions to be read aloud • Alternatives to tests (e.g., projects, oral presentations, videos)

For more information and resources on Dyslexia visit www.understood.org/dyslexia, the [International Dyslexia Association](http://InternationalDyslexiaAssociation.org), or [Learning Disabilities Association of America](http://LearningDisabilitiesAssociation.org).



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Accommodations for Hebrew Instruction + Jewish Learning

Because Hebrew (and especially pointed Hebrew / sacred texts) can prove challenging for Dyslexic learners here are some evidence-informed practices to support in the classroom:

Challenge in Hebrew learning	Best practice / accommodation	Why it helps
Decoding Hebrew letters	Use a multisensory, structured approach (like Hebrew-adapted Orton-Gillingham)	This method explicitly teaches sound-symbol relationships, with visual, tactile, and auditory reinforcement
Moving from decoding to reading fluency	Include repeated reading, scaffolded decoding practice, and guided fluency drills	This builds automaticity and reading rate in a slower, safe way
Hebrew is framed like a “foreign language” class	Provide clear scaffolding, structured grammar support, and fewer “fill-in-the-blank” tasks	Research on foreign language instruction for students with dyslexia recommends modeling, clear structure, and limiting gap-filling exercises
Overwhelm in group settings or fast-paced classes	Create small-group or one-on-one scaffolds, slower pacing, frequent review	Dyslexic learners appreciate clarity, repetition, and time for processing.
Ensuring access during assessments or recitations	Allow extended time, oral supports, use of audio or sometimes transliteration, and permit students to read from a “cheat sheet” of roots / prefixes	Helps reduce barriers so the student can show knowledge without being penalized by decoding constraints

For some more great tips on teaching Hebrew to Dyslexic learners visit www.hiddensparks.org/

Tip for Jewish contexts: When teaching texts for services, Torah reading, Haftarah, prayers, or Torah study, consider these additions:

1. Use partial transliteration side-by-side (for portions) to ease transition
2. Highlight roots / prefixes / suffixes visually (bold, underline)
3. Pre-teach vocabulary and morphology (so students recognize chunks rather than decoding every letter)
4. Offer recorded / chanted models so students can hear the pronunciation first
5. For chant-heavy or trope passages, use call-and-response rehearsal and chunking