



PODCAST LISTENING GUIDE:

*Understanding
Dyslexia*



Hi Teacher Friends!

Welcome to the Podcast Listening Guide!

We know the Science of Reading can sometimes feel big and overwhelming. That's why we started the Melissa & Lori Love Literacy podcast. Each week, we talk with researchers, teachers, and literacy experts who break down the research and share ideas you can try right away.

This guide pulls those conversations together around one focused topic. Use it for:

- **your own learning**
- **team discussions**
- **school-wide PD**

You'll find:

- **episodes grouped by topic**
- **conversation starters and classroom takeaways**
- **space to jot down notes or next steps**

There's never enough time in a teacher's day. Between lessons, kids who need you, and stacks of grading, it is a lot. Podcasts make learning feel doable. You can listen in the car, while setting up your room, or when you finally have a quiet moment to yourself at home.

However you use it, we hope this guide helps you feel encouraged, supported, and ready to try something new.

We can't wait to keep learning with you,

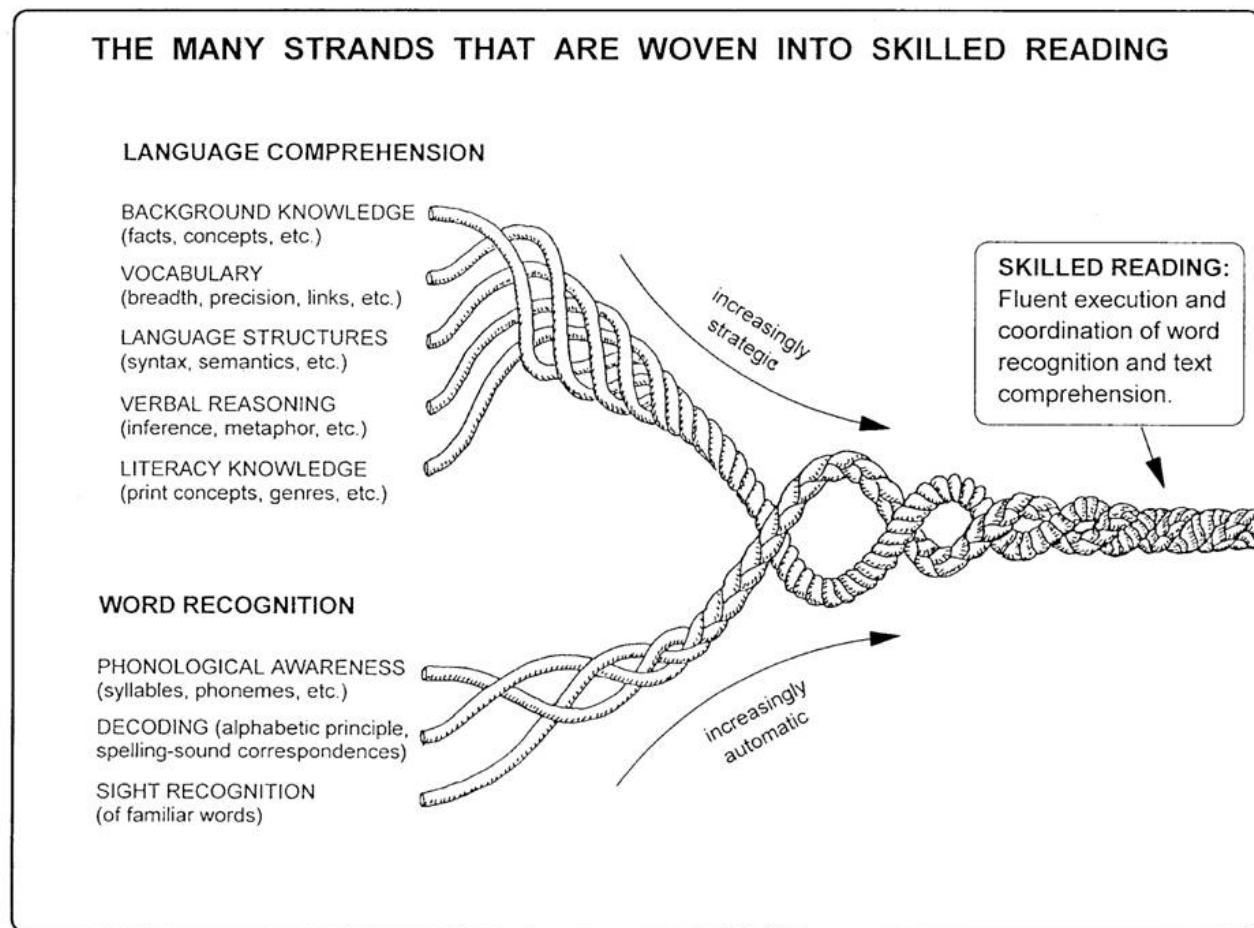
♥ *Melissa & Lori*



Understanding Dyslexia

Why is dyslexia important?

Dyslexia is the most common reading disability, affecting an estimated one in five students in every classroom. Left unrecognized, it can follow a student for years: struggling to sound out words in first grade can turn into avoiding reading altogether by fourth grade. On Scarborough's Reading Rope, dyslexia shows up in the word recognition strands. Language comprehension often develops on track, which is why a student can have strong vocabulary and ideas, and still struggle to read the words on the page. Understanding where dyslexia sits on the rope helps explain what's actually breaking down, and why early identification and the right instruction matter so much for these students.



LISTEN: [Ep. 178: The Simple View and Scarborough's Reading Rope with Hugh Catts](#)

Understanding Dyslexia

Here are three big takeaways about dyslexia from Melissa & Lori Love Literacy podcast straight from the voices of researchers and real classrooms:



See the Brain Behind the Struggle

Dyslexia isn't about effort, attention, or intelligence. Brain research from guests like Nadine Gaab and DJ Bolger shows that dyslexia is neurobiological, and it looks different from student to student even under the same diagnosis. Understanding what's actually happening in the brain helps you respond to a struggling reader with the right support.



Catch It Early

The earlier a struggling reader gets support, the better the outcome, and several guests in this guide point to the same red flags: late talking, trouble with rhyme, difficulty learning letter names. Nancy Blair and Pat Roberts put it plainly: don't wait to see if a student "grows out of it." A few years of watching and waiting can cost a student years of catching up later.



Listen to the Whole Story

Dyslexia doesn't stay in the classroom. Guests like Missy Purcell, Brett Tingley, and Steven Dykstra describe what it's like to live with dyslexia, or to raise or advocate for a child who has it, and the toll it can take when it goes unrecognized. Hearing these stories alongside the research is a reminder that the stakes here are personal, not just academic.



Together, these conversations help you recognize dyslexia earlier, understand it more accurately, and respond to it with more urgency. The episodes feature researchers and advocates, with research and real stories you can bring into your classroom.



EPISODE: 165

How Brains Learn to Read & Dyslexia

with Nadine Gaab

 **LISTEN TO THE EPISODE**

Researcher Nadine Gaab explains how the brain learns to read. She shares how early language and sound development, even before birth, play a key role in reading success. Dr. Gaab also clears up common myths about dyslexia and highlights the importance of early screening and intervention.

You'll learn how the brains of struggling readers may develop differently and what that means for instruction.

Episode Resources

Explore [this research-based resource](#) from Nadine Gaab that debunks common dyslexia myths. It also clarifies what the science really says about identification, instruction, and support.

While You Listen

What I Want to Remember	What I Want to Try
<i>Listen for how early language and sound development support learning to read.</i>	<i>Pay attention to instructional moves that support struggling readers.</i>



EPISODE: 131

Dyslexia, The Brain, and Reading with DJ Bolger

 **LISTEN TO THE EPISODE**

DJ Bolger studies the brain for a living, and in this episode he unpacks what's actually happening inside the brain of a person with dyslexia. You'll come away understanding why dyslexia doesn't look the same from student to student, even when the label on the file is identical.

You'll hear analogies that make dense brain research easy to hold onto, so you don't need a neuroscience background to follow along.

Episode Resources

Explore [IDA's dyslexia fact sheets](#) for a clear, research-based definition of what dyslexia is and isn't.

While You Listen

What I Want to Remember	What I Want to Try
<i>Listen for the why dyslexia looks different from student to student, even though the label is the same.</i>	<i>Notice which brain-based explanations you can translate into something you'd say to a parent.</i>



EPISODE: 127

Richard Gentry, Dyslexia Expert

with Richard Gentry

 **LISTEN TO THE EPISODE**

Dr. Richard Gentry, known to many as the "Guru of Spelling," grew up with dyslexia himself, and he brings that personal history into this conversation along with decades of research on reading and spelling development. You'll hear him explain why dyslexia isn't one fixed profile but shows up along a continuum, which helps explain why two students with the same diagnosis can look so different in your classroom. He walks through how dyslexia affects fluent reading, spelling, and decoding, so you can start to notice these patterns in your own students.

Episode Resources

Check out this article: "[A Guide to Early Markers of Dyslexia](#)" by Richard Gentry

While You Listen

What I Want to Remember	What I Want to Try
<i>Notice how Richard describes dyslexia as a continuum rather than a single fixed profile.</i>	<i>Listen for practical classroom accommodations he recommends.</i>

COMING SOON

Reading Instruction Done Right

with Pat Roberts & Nancy Blair



EPISODE: 262

Reading Instruction Done Right

with Pat Roberts & Nancy Blair



LISTEN TO THE EPISODE

Nancy Blair and Pat Roberts met as mothers of daughters with language-based learning differences, long before they became known as the co-founders of AIM Academy. In this episode they talk about the warning signs that get missed in kindergarten and first grade, and why "they'll be okay" is a phrase they want every teacher to be cautious about. You'll also hear about the grief and denial many parents move through before they get their child help, which can shape how you approach that first hard conversation with a family.

Episode Resources

Read [this AIM Institute post](#) on why early intervention changes outcomes for kids with dyslexia.

While You Listen

What I Want to Remember

Listen for the early red flags Blair and Roberts say get waved off too often.

What I Want to Try

Notice one early red flag you could start watching for in your students.



EPISODE: 128

Dear Balanced Literacy Teacher

with Missy Purcell

 [LISTEN TO THE EPISODE](#)

Missy Purcell taught balanced literacy for years before her own child was diagnosed with dyslexia, and that experience changed how she sees her past classroom decisions. In this episode she reads from the blog post that grew out of that experience, written as an open letter to the teacher she used to be.

If you've ever wondered what balanced literacy looks like from the other side, as a parent watching your own child struggle, this episode will stay with you.

Episode Resources

Read [Missy's blog post](#), written as an open letter to her former balanced literacy self.

While You Listen

What I Want to Remember	What I Want to Try
<i>Listen for how Missy's view changed once she was a parent, not just a teacher.</i>	<i>Notice one instructional habit you might revisit after hearing her story.</i>



EPISODE: 99

An Important Discussion about Reading with Our Dyslexic Children's President

with Brett Tingley

 **LISTEN TO THE EPISODE**

Brett Tingley leads Decoding Dyslexia, a parent-led advocacy network that's grown into a real force at the state and national level, and she joins the podcast to explain how that happened.

You'll hear what families are up against when a child struggles to read, often long before a school ever uses the word dyslexia. This episode is a good one to share with parents of your own students who feel like they're fighting this battle alone.

Episode Resources

Visit [Decoding Dyslexia](#) to see how parent advocacy has shaped dyslexia policy state by state.

While You Listen

What I Want to Remember	What I Want to Try
<i>Listen for what's changed at the state and national level because parents organized.</i>	<i>Think of one parent in your school you could point toward this network.</i>

Episode 207

Undiagnosed: The Ugly Side of Dyslexia

with Ameer Baraka



#dyslexiaawareness



EPISODE: 207

Undiagnosed: The Ugly Side of Dyslexia

with Ameer Baraka



LISTEN TO THE EPISODE

Ameer Baraka grew up in New Orleans with dyslexia that went undiagnosed for years, and in this episode he traces how that gap shaped his childhood and the choices that followed. He talks about being misunderstood by the adults around him, ending up incarcerated, and reclaiming his own education from inside that system. He is now an actor and an advocate, and he shares this story through his book, *Undiagnosed: The Ugly Side of Dyslexia*.

Episode Resources

Look up Baraka's book, *Undiagnosed: The Ugly Side of Dyslexia*, for the fuller account behind this episode.

While You Listen

What I Want to Remember	What I Want to Try
<i>Listen for what went unnoticed in Baraka's story, and by whom.</i>	<i>Notice if this story brings any of your students to mind.</i>



EPISODE: 100

Trauma and Reading

with Steven Dykstra

 [LISTEN TO THE EPISODE](#)

Psychologist Steven Dykstra has spent more than 25 years working with severely traumatized and mentally ill children, and in this episode he connects that work directly back to reading instruction. You'll hear him describe the chronic, repetitive trauma that builds up in a child who sits in a classroom every day and isn't taught to read using evidence-based practices. He makes the case that getting reading instruction wrong causes real, lasting harm, which raises the stakes on every instructional choice you make in your own classroom.

Episode Resources

Visit the [CDC's page on Adverse Childhood Experiences](#) for the research Dykstra draws on connecting trauma and unmet needs.

While You Listen

What I Want to Remember	What I Want to Try
<i>Listen for how he connects chronic reading failure to lasting harm.</i>	<i>Notice how this raises the stakes on your own instructional choices.</i>

Bringing It Together...



1 Across these episodes, what came up more than once? What's one idea you heard from multiple guests, in different words?

2 How did hearing from parent advocates alongside researchers and neuroscientists change or confirm what you already believed about dyslexia?

3 What is one misconception about dyslexia you've heard in your own school or community that this guide directly addresses?

Making It Happen...



What is one thing you're going to pay closer attention to now, whether that's in a student, a conversation with a parent, or your own instruction, and why this one?



Who might you talk to about it: the student, a parent, a colleague, or someone else on your team?



What might that conversation or change actually look like in practice?

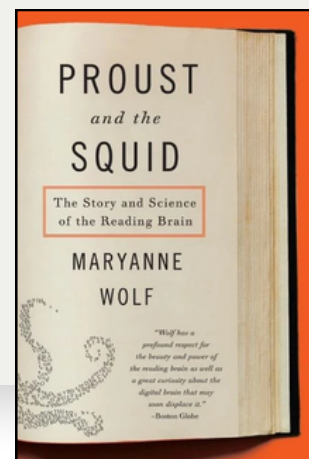
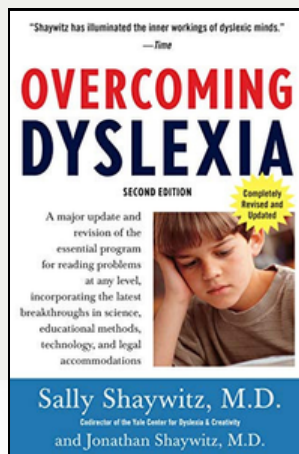
Learn More: Dyslexia



Resources We Love

Looking to learn more about dyslexia? These resources connect closely to the ideas discussed in this listening guide:

- *Overcoming Dyslexia* by Sally Shaywitz
- *Reading in the Brain* by Stanislas Dehaene
- *Proust and the Squid* by Maryanne Wolf





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CERTIFICATE

OF COMPLETION

proudly presented to

in recognition of your successful completion of the
UNDERSTANDING DYSLEXIA LISTENING GUIDE
(8 HOURS)

You've shown your dedication to growing your knowledge and sharpening your practice. This achievement celebrates your commitment to learning, your curiosity about the science of reading, and your hard work turning insights into impact.

Date:

MELISSA & LORI LOVE LITERACY

