

Teaching Tips for Teaching Students with Dyslexia

by Dr. Kelli Sandman-Hurley,
Dyslexia Training Institute

Teaching Tip #1

Take a moment every day or every teaching session to teach a dyslexic student that the English language is not crazy. For example, at the end of a session, show the student that the *l* in *would* is there to show its relationship the word *will*. The *u* is included so that *would* is different from *wood*. They will appreciate the explanation versus the 'English is crazy' approach, because it is not. Remind them that every word has a story and when we figure out the story, we will learn why it is spelled the way it is.

Teaching Tip #2

When a child has trouble decoding a word, make it a spelling question instead of a reading question (thanks to Gina Cooke for this insight that was truly fabulous). For example, if a student cannot decode the word *curious*, create a word sum (made famous by Pete Bowers) like this: *cure + i + ous --> curious*. Once they see the word parts they will know why the *u* is long and the *i* is long (a connector letter), have them verbally complete the word sum and then have them try to decode the word again.

Teaching Tip # 3

Remind the student with dyslexia, that our written language is meant to represent meaning, not sound...therefore we have to investigate what the words means before we know how it is pronounced. For example, show them that the *g* in *sign* is there to mark it's relationship to *signal* and *signature*. You can do this with a word sum (made famous by Pete Bowers) like this: *sign + al --> signal* and *sign + ate + ure --->signature*. So, the way a word is pronounced depends on the affixes that are attached to it.

Teaching Tip # 4

When using an OG approach and dictating spelling words, make sure the student is repeating the word before they try to spell. Then make sure they are tapping out the sounds - not the letters- before they write it down. Lastly, if it is a polysyllabic word, make sure they are spelling syllable by syllable.

Teaching Tip #5

Give a student with dyslexia permission to process. Increased processing time will almost always yield positive results. Our students have learned that our society wants immediate responses which is why many students just blurt out any answer or wait just long enough before someone just gives them the answer. Not in my office. They learn to take the time they need to process the question, the words and the answer. It takes time for them to unlearn their immediate response behavior, but they will and they will be relieved.