

# Learning Links Fact Sheet

## Dyscalculia in Children



Dyscalculia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in mathematics. While all children learn maths skills at different rates and have difficulty mastering new concepts, this usually improves with practice. If difficulties with basic mathematical concepts persist despite consistent practice and your child is falling behind others in their class, they may be showing signs of Dyscalculia.

### What is Dyscalculia?

Dyscalculia is a specific learning disorder (SLD) characterised by persistent difficulties with number sense, counting and mathematical problem solving. It is often mislabelled as 'number Dyslexia' or 'maths Dyslexia' but this is misleading as Dyslexia describes a difficulty in reading. Individuals with Dyscalculia can be proficient readers but have significant difficulties with working with numbers to perform simple calculations. However, it is thought that Dyscalculia could be as common as Dyslexia, affecting around one in 10 people.

### Signs of Dyscalculia

Because it is not well understood, the signs of Dyscalculia can be difficult to spot and may be missed. Learning how to identify Dyscalculia early can make a significant difference for children's academic outcomes. Some of the common signs include:

- Poor number recognition
- Difficulty associating a number with its value
- Poor counting skills
- Difficulty performing basic calculations such as single digit addition and subtraction
- Forget steps to solve a maths problem
- Poor number sense such as understanding patterns, quantity and estimations.
- Struggles to understand information in charts and graphs
- Avoidance of maths related tasks
- Maths Anxiety

It's important to note that not all math difficulties are caused by Dyscalculia; other factors can also impact a child's ability to perform in math.

## What Causes Dyscalculia?

The exact causes of Dyscalculia remain unknown; but research suggests it is linked to genetic factors, often running in families, and differences in the anatomy of the brain. It is a condition present from birth and cannot be “caught” or developed later in life from external factors.

## How is Dyscalculia Diagnosed?

Early identification and intervention is crucial. Start by reaching out to your child’s teacher to get their opinion. If your child’s maths skills are well below their classmates, or you notice any of the above signs of Dyscalculia, then you should consult a GP or paediatrician. A GP or paediatrician can perform ear, eye and medical tests to rule out other possible causes of maths difficulties and refer for a formal assessment by a psychologist. You do not need a referral to book a comprehensive evaluation with a psychologist.

A comprehensive Dyscalculia assessment may include:

- Family questionnaires to understand your child’s background and medical history
- Standardised cognitive and academic testing to understand your child’s full range of abilities
- Observations in the home, school or clinic environment to understand your child’s learning abilities in different settings

## Supporting Children With Dyscalculia

While there is no cure for Dyscalculia, there are many strategies and accommodations that can support children while they develop their maths skills. Some of the most effective ways to support a child with Dyscalculia include:

- **Targeted Maths Instruction:** Explicit instruction focusing on the areas of number sense, counting strategies, procedural knowledge and maths facts.
- **Visual aids and manipulatives:** Providing number and hundreds charts, formulas, annotated examples and glossary of important mathematical terms and symbols to help with calculations.
- **Assistive Technology:** Allowing use of calculators and computer software to assist with calculation and practice.



- Listing out each step of a multi-step math problem
- **Accommodations:** Providing extra time on tests, modified exam questions and extra space for working out problems can support children with Dyscalculia to demonstrate their learning.
- **Provide opportunities for practice:** play board games and card games that involve numbers, dice and moving spaces

## How Learning Links Can Help

Learning Links has more than 50 years of experience supporting children with learning difficulties like Dyscalculia. We offer a range of services and resources to support children with mathematics difficulties.

- **Dyscalculia Assessments:** get a comprehensive evaluation with a psychologist to understand the cause of a child’s difficulty with mathematics.
- **Specialist Dyscalculia Tutoring:** get weekly numeracy support with a teacher experienced in learning difficulties.

## Enquire about our services

Call our friendly Intake team on **1300 003 900** or submit an online enquiry.

[www.learninglinks.org.au/  
service-enquiry](http://www.learninglinks.org.au/service-enquiry)