LESSON 1 · ONE-PAGE GUIDE

DO WE NEED TESTING?

You can start helping tonight without a diagnosis. Testing opens the two doors only testing can open: school services and legal protections.

SCHOOL EVALUATION OR PRIVATE EVALUATION?

	SCHOOL EVALUATION	PRIVATE EVALUATION
Cost	Free	You pay; some insurance covers part
Speed	Legal timelines once you consent (federal default 60 days; states vary)	Depends on the waitlist; often faster
Decides	Eligibility for an IEP or 504 plan (opens the school's doors)	A diagnosis and recommendations; the school must consider it
Best when	You want services at school and a process with teeth	You want answers fast or a second opinion

If you can only do one: request the school evaluation. A private report is a companion, not a substitute.

THE MAGIC WORDS

PUT IT IN WRITING. DATE IT. KEEP A COPY.

"I am requesting a comprehensive psychoeducational evaluation of my child under IDEA, in the area of reading (Specific Learning Disability, including the characteristics of dyslexia)."

Address it to the principal and the special education director. Ask for written confirmation of receipt and for your parental rights in writing.

CALM REPLIES

"LET'S WAIT AND SEE."

"I appreciate that, and I'd still like to request an evaluation in writing today so the timeline starts."

"WE DON'T TEST FOR DYSLEXIA."

"Dyslexia falls under Specific Learning Disability in reading, so that's the evaluation I'm requesting."

"LET'S TRY INTERVENTION FIRST."

"Yes, please start it. I'd like the evaluation to go ahead alongside it rather than after it."

TONIGHT

Draft the request letter (the Letter Writer prompt is in the Resource Hub). Start a folder: every letter, reply, and report goes in it.

General information about the U.S. public-school process, not legal advice. Rules and timelines vary by state and district.

© 2026

LESSON 2 · ONE-PAGE GUIDE

IEP OR 504, AT A GLANCE

A 504 plan changes how your child accesses what's taught. An IEP changes what and how they're taught.

	504 PLAN	IEP
Job	Access: level the playing field	Instruction: change the teaching
Law	Section 504 (civil rights)	IDEA (special education)
Contains	Accommodations (extra time, audiobooks, no cold reading aloud)	Present levels, measurable goals, services and minutes, accommodations, progress reports
Fits when	Reading reasonably well with support; mainly needs barriers removed	Needs explicit, structured reading instruction they aren't getting

THE ONE QUESTION

ASK YOURSELF

Does my child need to be *taught* differently (IEP), or to *access* what's taught differently (504)? Many children start with a 504 and move to an IEP when the data shows the gap isn't closing. Neither is permanent.

INSIDE AN IEP: WHAT TO LOOK FOR

1. **PRESENT LEVELS**
   Data, not adjectives. “Reads 38 words per minute at a first-grade level” is a present level. “Struggles with reading” is not.
2. **MEASURABLE GOALS**
   Something you could check with a stopwatch or a word list, by a date.
3. **SERVICES AND MINUTES**
   Who, how often, how long, where. Ask what the instruction *is*: structured, explicit, systematic phonics.
4. **ACCOMMODATIONS**
   Where each applies: classwork, tests, homework, state testing.
5. **PROGRESS REPORTING**
   At least as often as report cards, measured the same way the goal is written.

IF YOU HEAR “NOT ELIGIBLE FOR AN IEP”

“Then let's talk about a 504 plan today, and put in writing what would change your mind about eligibility later.”

TONIGHT

Write one sentence: “I think my child needs ___ because ___.” Bring it to the meeting.

General information about the U.S. public-school process, not legal advice. Rules vary by state and district.

© 2026

LESSON 3 · ONE-PAGE GUIDE

THE MEETING KIT

Walk in with data, a one-page introduction to your child, and your questions written down.

IN THE FOLDER

- ☐ Home practice notes and mastery checks
- ☐ The evaluation report, read twice, terms highlighted
- ☐ The one-page intro (two copies)
- ☐ My questions, in order
- ☐ Lesson 2 sentence: which plan, and why
- ☐ Lesson 4 shortlist: my three accommodations
- ☐ Pen, and someone to take notes
- ☐ The parent-rights notice (procedural safeguards)

SCRIPTS FOR THE ROOM

THE ALLY MOVE (FIRST TWO MINUTES)

"Thank you for ___ (something specific). It made a real difference at home."

"WE DON'T USE THE WORD DYSLEXIA HERE."

"That's fine. Can we write Specific Learning Disability in reading, and describe the instruction: structured, explicit, multisensory phonics?"

"HE'S NOT FAR ENOUGH BEHIND YET."

"Could I have the criteria in writing? And I'd like my written evaluation request to stay on its timeline while intervention continues."

"READING SUPPORT THREE TIMES A WEEK."

"What is the instruction, who delivers it, and what's their training in it? I'd like that in the services section."

"WE JUST NEED YOUR SIGNATURE."

"I'm going to take it home and read it tonight. I'll have it back by Friday."

ONE-PAGE INTRO: MEET ___

Three things ___ is great at (specific, real)

What reading is like right now, including one thing that's getting better at home

What helps · **What we're hoping for this year** (end on partnership)

Rights to remember: written consent before evaluation or services; the report ahead of time; an independent evaluation if you disagree; a meeting whenever you ask; bring anyone you like. Your parent-rights notice is the authoritative list. Not legal advice.

© 2026

LESSON 4 · ONE-PAGE GUIDE

ACCOMMODATIONS THAT ACTUALLY HELP

Protect your child's energy for learning. Don't lower the bar.

THE DYSLEXIA-FIT SHORTLIST: CHECK YOUR THREE

- ☐ Extended time (usually time and a half)
- ☐ Audiobooks and text-to-speech
- ☐ No cold reading aloud
- ☐ Reduced copying; notes or outlines provided
- ☐ Spelling not penalized outside spelling
- ☐ Structured literacy named in services
- ☐ Assistive tech the child controls
- ☐ Oral options to show understanding

THE ONE QUESTION FOR ANYTHING OFFERED

1. **DOES IT PROTECT ENERGY?**
   Extra time, audio, notes provided. Yes, every time.
2. **DOES IT LOWER THE BAR?**
   A shorter list with no change in instruction. Push back.
3. **DOES IT BUILD INDEPENDENCE?**
   Tools the child turns on themselves. Yes.
4. **DOES IT HIDE THE PROBLEM?**
   Reading everything to the child. Only alongside reading instruction, never instead of it.

"WE CAN GIVE HIM A REDUCED SPELLING LIST."

"Thank you. Alongside that, what instruction will change so the list grows instead of shrinks?"

ANY ACCOMMODATION THAT REPLACES READING

"Is this alongside reading instruction, or instead of it?"

TONIGHT

Check the three that fit your child right now. Add them to the meeting kit.

General information, not legal advice. Which accommodations a school agrees to is decided in the IEP or 504 meeting and varies by district.

© 2026

LESSON 5 · ONE-PAGE GUIDE

THE LONG GAME

Brief monthly check-ins beat crisis emails. One rung at a time when you need the ladder.

THE MONTHLY CHECK-IN (THREE LINES)

COPY, FILL, SEND. ONCE A MONTH.

Hi ___, quick monthly check-in from home. What's working: ___. One question: ___? Thank you for everything you're doing with ___.

AFTER EVERY CONVERSATION

“Thanks for talking today. Summarizing what we agreed: ___.”

SHARE WHAT WORKS AT HOME

“Scooping syllables is clicking at home. Could she use it in class?”

THE LADDER

1. **TEACHER**
   Always first. Assume logistics, not bad faith. Follow up in writing.
2. **CASE MANAGER**
   Owns the plan across classrooms. Copy the teacher.
3. **PRINCIPAL**
   Short, factual, dated. Request a meeting, not a reply. (You can call an IEP/504 team meeting any time.)
4. **DISTRICT SPECIAL-EDUCATION DIRECTOR**
   Rare. Beyond this: the formal options in your parent-rights notice. Your state's Parent Training and Information Center helps for free.

GROWING YOUR OWN ADVOCATE

THE GRADUATION SENTENCE

“I have dyslexia. I learn best when I can hear the text and have extra time.” Rehearse it like a sound card. Let your child sit in on the end of a meeting when ready. By middle school, they make one ask themselves; you stay copied.

TONIGHT

Put the first monthly check-in on the calendar and draft it now. Then the other half of advocacy: the ParentTutor Training, at your kitchen table.

General information about working with U.S. public schools, not legal advice.

© 2026