

< Treatment options

Treatment for Kids With Dyscalculia



By Amanda Morin



At a Glance

- There are many ways to help kids with dyscalculia build math skills.
- Kids with dyscalculia can benefit from specialized instruction, especially in grade school.
- There are no medications that treat dyscalculia, but medication could help kids deal with co-occurring issues like ADHD or anxiety.

Whether you **know your child has dyscalculia**, or you **think your child may have dyscalculia**, there are ways to help. Professionals both in and out of school can work with your child to build **math skills**, like **number sense**. And there are **accommodations** that can make it easier for your child to work at the same level as his classmates.

There are no medications for **dyscalculia**. But medication can be a treatment for other issues, like **ADHD** (also known as ADD) and **anxiety**, that often co-occur with learning and thinking differences.

Learn about different strategies, supports, and therapies that can help kids with dyscalculia.

Instruction and Support for Kids With Dyscalculia

There are no formal programs for teaching struggling math students like there are for struggling readers. But that doesn't mean these kids can't benefit from **specialized instruction**, especially in grade school. Certain strategies and approaches can be helpful for some kids.

One is **multisensory instruction**. This teaching approach

uses sight, touch, hearing and movement to give kids different ways to learn skills and understand concepts.

Multisensory math techniques can help kids understand what the numbers and symbols represent. These techniques often teach math concepts in a logical way in which one skill builds on the next.

Using objects to see quantities and how they change provides a concrete way of understanding how certain math concepts work. It can also help kids develop number sense and make stronger connections to what they're learning.

It's important to help kids connect concrete items to the symbols that represent them. In other words, teach them that the numeral 5 represents five blocks or five claps, or any other multisensory tool.

Schools might use this type of instruction as part of special education. They also might use it as part of educational intervention like RTI. Some private **math tutors** or educational therapists might use these techniques, as well.

Specialized instruction isn't the only way to support kids with dyscalculia. There are a number of **accommodations** they might get through an IEP or a 504 plan. Extended time and use of a calculator on tests are just two examples. Kids might also be allowed to use manipulatives like blocks.

Assistive technology can also help. There are many **AT tools** for math that kids can use at school and at home. These include graphing tools, math notation tools and **graphic organizers for math**. There are also apps that work on basic number concepts.

Treatment for Co-Occurring Issues

Many kids with dyscalculia also have other learning and thinking differences. Two that commonly co-occur are ADHD and dyslexia.

Treatment for ADHD or for dyslexia won't necessarily improve math skills. But it can help with other difficulties that may be having an impact.

For instance, trouble with focus and self-control can make it hard for struggling math students to work on their challenges. Reducing ADHD symptoms through medication and behavior therapy might help. (These medicines won't help kids who don't have ADHD).

Kids who have dyscalculia often have dyslexia as well. In fact, it's estimated that 43 to 65 percent of kids who have math issues also have reading issues. For those kids, improving reading skills can make a big difference in their ability to do math work. That's especially true for word problems.

It's important for struggling math learners to have a full evaluation for learning differences. That's the only way to see if they have dyscalculia, along with other learning differences, such as dyslexia. Different learning differences require different types of instruction. So when kids have more than one issue, it's important to have each issue addressed separately.

Ways to Help With Dyscalculia at Home

There are many ways you can help your child build math skills at home. Some can be worked into afterschool or

weekend activities. You can even help your child learn while having fun playing **board games** that can help build math skills.

For more ways to help, check out **apps**, **Chrome tools** and **software** for math. Download a **dyscalculia fact sheet** to give to teachers, friends and family members so they can learn more about your child's challenges. And read **how a young adult manages anxiety that comes from her dyscalculia**.

Key Takeaways

- There are no medications that treat dyscalculia, but there are lots of ways to help kids with this math issue succeed.
- Multisensory instruction can help kids with dyscalculia understand math concepts.
- Accommodations, like using manipulatives, and assistive technology can also help kids with dyscalculia.

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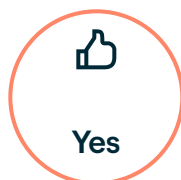
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