

# When do speech difficulties in children matter for literacy?

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A new study found that speech difficulties are linked with difficulties in learning to read when children first start school, but these effects are no longer apparent at 8 years of age.

Researchers confirmed that early language impairment that co-occurs with speech difficulties predicts poor literacy skills at both 5½ and 8 years of age. Having a [family history](#) of [dyslexia](#) had a small but significant effect on literacy at both ages, above and beyond the effects of speech and language.

"Speech difficulties can be a warning sign, but it is only when a child also has weak language skills that they are likely to lead to significant reading problems, especially if there is a family history of dyslexia," said Dr. Marianna Hayiou-Thomas, lead author of the *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* study.

**More information:** Marianna E. Hayiou-Thomas et al, When does speech sound disorder matter for literacy? The role of disordered speech errors, co-occurring language impairment and family risk of dyslexia, *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* (2016). DOI: [10.1111/jcpp.12648](https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.12648)

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