



# How to Support Adolescents with Word Reading Difficulties

*Advice from Linda Diamond, Author of the Teaching Reading Sourcebook and Assessing Reading Multiple Measures*

## Intervention That Works for Older Students

1. Ensure students who are reading with difficulty continue to have access to a knowledge-building, grade-level curricula; this may necessitate reading aloud and the use of technology.
2. Add a purposeful block of time to provide the earlier foundational skills students missed that impede their ability to be independent learners, in addition to, not instead of, core curriculum.
3. Ensure intervention time is of sufficient intensity and duration to produce strong gains.
4. Look for materials that are respectful, engaging, age-appropriate and bolster the student's sense of efficacy.
5. Identify programs and methods that systematically, explicitly, and cumulatively teach all necessary literacy components.
6. Seek curricula that develop language through study of phonology, morphology, orthography, syntax and text structure.
7. Utilize a blended model that includes both missing basic skills and instruction in language comprehension and negotiating complex texts.
8. Remember it is the student's level of reading skills and identified strengths and weaknesses, not the age nor grade level of a student, that determines the content of the intervention.
9. Match the intervention to the student's level of reading development: those with significantly impaired word reading may require phonological skills to be strengthened; those with less impaired word reading may focus on multisyllabic words and fluency; and those with sufficient word reading skill may profit from focused work building vocabulary, unpacking academic language, developing background knowledge, and practicing text reading techniques.
10. Understand that overcoming large gaps takes time, often more than a period and more than a single year, but remember it is not too late.

## Intervention That Does Not Work for Older Students Who Are Very Far Behind



1. Expecting a core curriculum teacher to be able to provide short bursts of targeted skill instruction periodically within the regular core class; this works for students slightly below level, not for students significantly below.
2. Having all instruction scaffolded without also having an additional, targeted time to teach students the missing skills that will set them on the road to independence. No one will scaffold and read aloud to these students when they leave high school.
3. Teaching only word study or only text comprehension or developing background knowledge. All are needed.
4. Giving up and feeling that it is too late for the students who missed the early building blocks of learning to read.

## Selected Intervention Curricula That Can Work



[Flex Literacy](#): a comprehensive blended intervention (McGraw-Hill/SRA)

[Language! Live](#): a comprehensive blended intervention (Voyager Sopris Learning)

[Lexia Power Up](#): an adaptive blended learning model (Lexia, a Cambian company)

[PHONICS for Reading](#): a systematic and age-appropriate decoding intervention (Curriculum Associates)

[Read 180 Universal](#) plus [System 44](#): together, a comprehensive intervention (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)

[Reading Plus](#): adaptive instruction with a focus on development of academic vocabulary and comprehension skills (readingplus.com)

[REWARDS, REWARDS Plus](#): a family of interventions that focus on reading long, multisyllabic words and comprehending content-area text (Voyager Sopris Learning)

[SIPPS Plus](#) and [Challenge](#): small group explicit instruction with a focus on phonology, morphology, orthography and fluency (Center for the Collaborative Classroom)

[The Third Quest](#): a comprehensive intervention (Ancora Publishing)

[Word Intelligence—Developing Academic and Content Vocabulary](#): a supplemental vocabulary intervention for grades 6 and up, targeting English learners (Consortium on Reaching Excellence in Education)

### Get More Advice for Supporting Students with Word Reading Difficulties

Visit [pivotlearning.org/library](https://pivotlearning.org/library) to find advice from other experts and resources to build your knowledge of word reading difficulties, including dyslexia.