

The *Middle School* **GOAL SETTING** *Guide*



Homeschooling
WITH **DYSLEXIA**
Educate yourself so you can educate your child.

with Teaching Guides & Curriculum Recommendations

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The What and Why of This Guide



Middle school is a time of many transitions for our kids. Our kids with dyslexia and ADHD may still be in need of remediation or may be ready to move on to the more structured learning common in middle and high school.

Every child is different and parents are encouraged to teach their kids at their level, with methods and programs that work well with our kids' unique learning needs and strengths.

This guide lists the key academic and life skills that we can be working towards with our middle schoolers.

These learning goals are intended as long-term milestones, gradually achieved with consistent practice and direct instruction.

You will find some key academic skills listed such as Reading, Spelling, Grammar, Composition/ Basic Essay Writing, Math, History, and Science.

There are also some general learning skills such as Verbal Discussion and Critical Thinking, Time Management and Organization, Understanding Learning Strengths and Weaknesses, and Proficiency in Assistive Technology.

Lastly, there are some skills that may be needed in a classroom setting such as Note-taking, Learning From a Textbook, and Test-taking Skills.

Most categories include an assessment guide to see what knowledge your child currently has. Each category includes a teaching guide with some of the best teaching strategies for each topic. Relevant curricula are linked to the teaching guides and also in the [Comprehensive Curriculum Guide](#).

This is a LOT of information. Use what you need and save the rest for later.

Priorities for learning in middle school are remediation, exposure, and the gradual development of independent learning via the use of assistive technology and accommodations.



Academic Skills



Under each category, you will find an informal assessment (if applicable, parent observation is sufficient for some areas), a teaching guide, and a curriculum resource.

1. Remediated Reading, Spelling, and Grammar ●●●

For most families homeschooling kids with dyslexia in middle school, it will still be necessary to remediate reading, spelling, and grammar. That is not to say we should be stressing over these things BUT since we know that dyslexia is a language-based learning difficulty and that kids with dyslexia need a lot of practice to become fluent in language, time should be spent in helping kids in these areas

✓ Reading

It is common for some kids in middle school to need continued remediation in reading. It is also common for many middle school kids with dyslexia to suddenly become much more fluent in reading. I often refer to this as 'middle school magic'. Don't worry if your kids need a bit more remediation in middle school.

Assessment: [Use this informal reading level assessment to determine your child's reading level.](#)

Teaching Guide with Curriculum Suggestions: Refer to this guide for methods and strategies to teach reading in middle school. [Homeschool Parent's Guide to Teaching Reading to Kids with Dyslexia](#)

✓ Fluency

Reading fluency is the ability to read text accurately, quickly, and with proper expression. It involves three key components:

Accuracy: Reading words correctly without excessive errors.

Speed: Reading at an appropriate pace for comprehension.

Prosody: Using proper expression, intonation, and phrasing to reflect the meaning of the text.

Fluent readers can read smoothly without having to stop and decode each word, which allows them to focus on understanding the content. Fluency is a critical skill for reading comprehension, especially for students with dyslexia or ADHD, as difficulties in fluency can hinder their ability to understand and retain what they read.

Assessment: [Use this informal reading fluency assessment to track and assess your child's reading fluency.](#)

Alternatively, you can observe your child's reading fluency and judge whether they are fully fluent or if they need continued practice in this area.

Teaching Guide with Curriculum Suggestions: [Refer to this guide for methods and strategies for teaching reading fluency to kids in middle school.](#)

✓ **Comprehension**

Most Kids with dyslexia have no problem with reading comprehension when being read to or after they achieve reading fluency. Before achieving fluency, comprehension is affected because kids are using so much brain power to decode the words on the page, there is not enough space left for complete comprehension.

If you have a child who is reading fluently and still struggling with comprehension, see the teaching guide below for specific, research-based strategies for increasing comprehension.

Teaching Guide: [Strategies to Improve Comprehension](#)

Curriculum: [See my comprehension recommendations in the Comprehensive Curriculum Guide.](#)

✓ **Spelling**

It is common for kids with dyslexia to read much better than they spell. Reading, or decoding, is much simpler than spelling, or encoding. In reading, it is easy to remember that 'ee' says the long sound of 'e'. It is much more difficult to spell the long sound of 'e' and have to choose from the myriad of ways to spell that sound. Remediating spelling through the middle school years is often a good idea.

Assessment: [Use this informal spelling level assessment sheet to track your child's grade level in spelling.](#)

Almost all dyslexic kids will need spelling instruction into middle school and even beyond. This is to be expected. Remember, assistive technology from middle school and up is a fair and acceptable accommodation for kids with dyslexia.

Teaching Guide With Curriculum Suggestions: [Use this teaching guide for methods and strategies for teaching spelling in middle school.](#)

✓ **Grammar**

Kids with dyslexia often have a hard time remembering and applying rules for grammar. After many years of homeschooling kids with dyslexia, I have opted for a focus on practical, everyday grammar. This is things like punctuation, capitalization, and subject-verb agreement. Our kids often need continued instruction in grammar during the middle school years. Of course, assistive technology can be a huge help in this area.

Assessment: [Use this informal grammar assessment to gauge the level of mastery your child has with practical everyday grammar.](#) These skills are the ones used in everyday writing.

✓ Grammar

Teaching Guide: None. My recommendation after years of teaching grammar to kids with dyslexia is to do a small amount of grammar review daily with a focus on practical grammar that is used in everyday writing. Knowing parts of speech is a slog; kids with dyslexia have a hard time remembering parts of speech and if they do, the knowledge is rarely useful.

Curriculum: [See my grammar recommendations in the Comprehensive Curriculum Guide.](#)

2. Composition/ Basic Essay Writing ● ● ●

Students should develop confidence in writing, focusing on organization rather than spelling or mechanics. Focus on these as a separate subject and allow writing instruction to be solely about writing. By the end of middle school, they should be able to structure paragraphs and basic essays, preparing them for more advanced writing techniques in high school. Encouraging oral narration before formal writing can also strengthen their ability to articulate thoughts.

Assessment: [See this Basic Essay Writing Skills Checklist to see which skills your child has experience with or needs more work on.](#)

Teaching Guide: [How to Teach Basic Essay Writing with Curriculum Suggestions](#)

3. Math Proficiency ● ● ●

Students should work toward a solid foundation in math, whether reinforcing basic skills or advancing to pre-algebra. Progress should be individualized based on ability, with a focus on mastering key concepts rather than adhering strictly to grade-level expectations. It is also important to note that many kids, even in middle school, will struggle with remembering math facts. This can be accommodated with the use of math fact and factoring sheets as well as the strategic use of a calculator.

Assessment: Assessment of math can be done by parent observation. What level of math curriculum are they currently using? How are they mastering the topics?

Teaching Guide: None. Since math builds on itself, it is recommended to continue working at your child's level and pace through a dyslexia-friendly math curriculum.

Curriculum: [See my math resource recommendations in the Comprehensive Curriculum Guide.](#)

4. Grasping the Flow of History ● ● ●

A chronological approach to history, reinforced through timelines and repetition, can help students develop a solid understanding of historical events and their relationships.

Assessment: [See the basic timeline of world history](#) to see which eras you have learned something about. This list has a lot of detail. If your kid has a basic knowledge of the major eras of history, this is fine.

Teaching Guide: None. In middle school, history can be approached from an exposure point of view or from an interest point of view. If you are busy with remediation, focus on an exposure to history by reading historical fiction or watching documentaries. If remediation is not taking up most of your day, choose topics of interest to your child from history to study. Lastly, finding a chronological overview of history can be a nice way to study history in middle school.

Curriculum: [See the comprehensive curriculum guide for my recommendations for dyslexia-friendly history resources.](#)

5. Science Literacy ● ● ●

By the end of middle school, students should have familiarity with key concepts in physical and life sciences, including basic vocabulary and foundational principles.

Assessment: [See this General Science Knowledge Checklist](#) to see how much of science you have been exposed to, not mastered. Again, high school provides plenty of time for kids to learn plenty about science. If there hasn't been much covered, a simple general science program is a great idea at some point in the middle school years.

Teaching Guide: None. In middle school, science can be approached from an exposure point of view or from an interest point of view. If you are busy with remediation, focus on an exposure to science by doing hands-on science projects in areas of interest or watching science shows.

Curriculum: [See the comprehensive curriculum guide for resources for teaching science in middle school.](#)



General Learning Skills



1. Verbal Discussion and Critical Thinking ● ● ●

As abstract reasoning develops, students should practice discussing and debating ideas. Encouraging conversations about history, literature, and current events can strengthen their ability to analyze and express complex thoughts.

This usually is not a problem for middle school kids.

Teaching Guide: If you have a middle school child who is closed off to communication, see this [Guide for Parents: Supporting Quiet Middle Schoolers](#) for ideas on how to draw your child out in conversation.

2. Time Management and Organization ● ● ●

Executive Functions in Middle School-Aged Kids (Ages 11-14)

Time management and organization are largely controlled by the executive functions of the brain. During middle school, executive functions should be developing, but they are not fully matured. Middle schoolers with dyslexia and ADHD may struggle with organization, planning, emotional control, and impulse management. However, they should be progressing in the following areas:

✓ Organization & Planning

- Managing school assignments and deadlines.
- Keeping track of homework, projects, and materials.
- Breaking tasks into smaller steps and following a schedule.

✓ Time Management

- Estimating how long tasks will take.
- Using planners or digital tools to manage time.
- Prioritizing important tasks over distractions.

✓ Working Memory

- Following multi-step directions without constant reminders.
- Remembering important information from lessons or discussions.
- Keeping track of multiple pieces of information while solving problems.

✓ Emotional Control

- Managing frustration and disappointment without overreacting.
- Using coping strategies when upset or overwhelmed.
- Handling peer conflicts and stressful situations with maturity.

✓ Impulse Control

Thinking before speaking or acting.
Resisting distractions in class or while doing homework.
Making thoughtful decisions instead of acting on impulse.

✓ Flexible Thinking

Adjusting to schedule changes or new expectations.
Understanding different perspectives in social interactions.
Finding new ways to solve problems when the first attempt doesn't work.

✓ Self-Monitoring & Metacognition

Recognizing strengths and areas for improvement.
Checking work for mistakes before turning it in.
Evaluating past decisions and adjusting future behavior.

Middle school is a crucial time for building executive function skills. Using checklists, planners, or digital tools can help students develop consistent habits in managing schoolwork and responsibilities. For students with attention challenges, structured routines can be especially beneficial.

Assessment: [Use this checklist to see which areas of time management and organization your child needs help with.](#)

Teaching Guide with Resource Suggestions: [Use this guide for teaching time management and organization for tips and ideas of how to teach these skills.](#)

3. Understanding Learning Strengths and Weaknesses

How much do your kids understand about their learning strengths and weaknesses? Students should begin identifying the strategies and tools that best support their learning. Experimenting with different study methods, such as using assistive technology or note-taking, can help them recognize their most effective approaches.

Assessment: Use this [Learning Strengths and Strategies Worksheet](#) to see how much they know about their unique strengths and weaknesses.

Teaching Guide: Use this [Guide to Identifying Learning Strengths and Weaknesses for Kids with Dyslexia and ADHD](#) to help teach your kids about the unique learning strengths and weaknesses that people with dyslexia and ADHD have.

4. Proficiency in Assistive Technology

Students should become comfortable using assistive tools that can support their learning needs, such as text-to-speech software, audiobooks, or speech-to-text applications. Familiarity with these tools can provide long-term benefits.

See: [Guide to Assistive Technology](#) for suggestions on how to teach kids to use assistive technology as well as links to the most helpful apps and programs for people with dyslexia and ADHD.

Skills That May Be Needed in a Classroom Setting



1. Note-Taking ● ● ●

The ability to take meaningful notes is a crucial skill for classroom learning that improves with practice. Introducing note-taking through simple activities, such as jotting down key points during lessons, can help students develop this skill progressively.

Teaching Guide: [How to Teach Note-Taking to Middle Schoolers with Dyslexia](#)

2. Learning from a Textbook ● ● ●

Understanding how to extract key information from textbooks will be essential in a traditional classroom setting which may be likely in the middle and high school years. Using structured methods, such as the SQ3R Method (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review), can help students navigate non-fiction texts effectively. Digital tools with text-to-speech options can also aid comprehension.

Teaching Guide: [Helping Middle School Students with Dyslexia to Learn from Textbooks](#)

3. Test-Taking Skills ● ● ●

Students should become comfortable with test formats, learn how to highlight key information for studying, and use tools like flashcards (e.g., Quizlet) to reinforce learning.

Teaching Guide: [Helping Middle School Students with Dyslexia Prepare for Tests](#)



By focusing on these skills, students with dyslexia can build confidence and readiness for the challenges of high school while developing lifelong learning strategies.