



# Therapist or Tutor?

Parents often ask about the difference between Academic Language Therapy with a CAT or CALT and dyslexia tutoring or regular tutoring. All involve working with a student who struggles with reading and writing. However, there can be significant differences between these approaches:

➔ **Academic Language Therapy**, or dyslexia therapy, involves working with a professional who has received specialized training in Multi-Sensory Language Education (MSLE), also called Structured Literacy. Completion of rigorous training through the accredited Atlantic Seaboard Dyslexia Education Center (ASDEC) in the Sounds In Syllables (SIS) program leads to certification as a Certified Academic Therapist (CAT). Once earning the CAT designation, therapists can undertake a rigorous examination with ALTA, an international dyslexia professional credentialing organization, to achieve the designation of Certified Academic Language Therapist (CALT).

CAT and CALT certifications require the highest level of training for a dyslexia specialist, spanning two years, and include 200 hours of classroom instruction and a 700-hour practicum. CATs and CALTs have a deep understanding of dyslexia and the neurological and cognitive factors that contribute to it. They use an evidence-based, structured approach to help students build the foundational components necessary to become proficient at reading and writing. Academic Language Therapy with a CAT or CALT is highly diagnostic and tailored to the student's specific needs.

➔ **Dyslexia tutors** are comprised of professionals with a wide variety of educational backgrounds and experience. A dyslexia tutor may have taken a five-day class in structured literacy, completed a full educational experience but no practicum, or they may have completed a full educational sequence, an intensive practicum, and hold a certification from an organization. For example, a professional who holds a certification as a Fellow from the Orton-Gillingham Academy (OGA) has completed in-depth training and practicum over several years but may still refer to their practice as dyslexia tutoring. It is essential to ask about a professional's education, practicum experience, and certification as the term 'dyslexia tutor' does not give enough information on its own.

While some dyslexia tutors may have less experience and expertise compared to a CAT or CALT, they may still have a good understanding of the challenges faced by students with dyslexia. They may use a scripted program to provide intervention to students with dyslexia, whereas a CAT, CALT, or OGA Fellow has the training and experience to provide a diagnostic and responsive approach. The needs of an individual student can help dictate the appropriate professional.

➔ A **regular tutor** works with students on the content in their classes and likely does not have any specialized training to work with students with dyslexia. The tutor may be able to help with basic reading and writing skills, but they may not have the knowledge or expertise to address the underlying issues of dyslexia. As a result, the approach may be less effective, and the student may continue to struggle with reading and writing.

**Choose the right support for your child's dyslexia needs. Ask about qualifications and methods to make an informed decision.**

Visit [ASDEC.org](https://www.asdec.org) for more information on Sounds In Syllables.