Silent sustained reading has its benefits to proficient readers who are motivated to read, but to unmotivated or under-developed readers, it offers little benefit.

When a motivated and efficient reader reads, he or she develops vocabulary beyond what he hears or speaks, complex sentence structure to use in writing and eventually academic conversations, and knowledge. He simply learns more about more stuff. It is enjoyable. A proficient, developed reader can read a variety of text formats and can readily connect the information to previous and relevant events, and may be exposed to over one million words a year is they read just 20 minutes a day (Mathew Effect, 1986). Most children are developed readers by 4th grade, many of these enjoy reading. In today’s world more than ever with competing social media and gaming, students need to be encouraged to read.

Reading does not come naturally to the dyslexic reader. When A dyslexic learner reads, he spends his time decoding the text and trying to make sense of what it is saying.  He or she is rarely able to read with understanding at their intellect and interest level. Some dyslexic readers are motivated to read and should be encouraged to do so; however, when he or she is required to read for understanding and time is a factor, the dyslexic learner should be allowed to use an audio format. [Audiobooks are believed to be beneficial to all students](http://www.readingrockets.org/article/benefits-audiobooks-all-readers). Vocabulary, sentence structure, academic language, and knowledge can be attained with the same efficiency in both audio and printed format. Slow reading speed and improper word identification will limit the dyslexic reader’s exposure to usable vocabulary and knowledge. The dyslexic learner deserves to be exposed to over one million words a year like his or her non-impaired peer; he simple will not be exposed to that many words by reading silently. For comprehension, attention to decoding impairs the dyslexic reader in recognizing complex sentence structures and therefore impedes his ability to connect concepts, comprehend texts, and infer word meaning; all typically strengths of the dyslexic mind through audio and verbal communication. He should be given the choice not as a temporary solution but a life-long viable means to learning.

One of the arguments for sustained reading is [fluency](http://dyslexiahelp.umich.edu/professionals/dyslexia-school/reading-fluency). The student will become a faster reader more accurate reader. In the case of the developing dyslexic reader, forced, sustained reading has the reverse effect on fluency, it forces the student to use bad habits, guessing, and can harm their interest in books and other printed sources. The dyslexic requires proper mediation in oral fluency through controlled texts to improve reading rate. Explicit instruction at the word, sentence, and passage level with guidance and interaction is the way to improve accurate reading. Even after successful intervention, it still will take the dyslexic student more time and effort to decode at the word level and read with fluency. Silent reading cannot lead to good reading if the reader does not know they are reading something wrong.

Silent reading is hoped to spark an interest in reading. For the dyslexic student it can have the opposite effect. If forced to read, they simply began to hate reading because they cannot read what they are asked to read or material at their interest/intellect level and to read takes a considerable amount of effort. New technology in [text to speech](http://dyslexiahelp.umich.edu/tools/apps/topic/reading/text-speech) and other audio formats allow the dyslexic student autonomy and choices in reading complex material, naturally sparking an interest in reading and learning.

There is no cure for dyslexia, but we can [treat it.](http://eida.org/effective-reading-instruction/) Even when a dyslexic student approaches, reaches, or possibly surpasses grade level reading, ***forced*silent reading is not beneficial**. They will not learn to read better through silent practice. Again, they may enjoy silent reading and **should never be discouraged from reading**; **they**just **deserve the choice.**

Marci Peterson, M.Ed.

Roseville, CA