

Questions to ask an intervention provider

School program, tutoring center, or private specialist: the same eight questions separate evidence-based instruction from expensive hope.

1 What program or approach do you use?

STRONG ANSWER: names it without hesitating (structured literacy / Orton–Gillingham principles) and explains why it fits your child.

CAUTION FLAG: "we customize for every learner" with no specifics; eclectic usually means unsystematic.

2 What evidence supports it?

STRONG: comfortable discussing the research base for structured literacy, without promising miracles.

CAUTION: testimonials, brain buzzwords, or a "guarantee."

3 What training and certification does the instructor have?

STRONG: specific coursework hours, supervised practicum, certifying organization.

CAUTION: "years of experience with struggling readers" and nothing else.

4 How often, how long, and in what group size?

STRONG: multiple sessions weekly, individual or very small group, sustained for months. Intensity drives results.

CAUTION: "whatever schedule works for you." Convenience-dosed intervention maintains gaps; it doesn't close them.

5 How will you know where my child is starting?

STRONG: an initial assessment of phonological awareness, decoding, spelling, and fluency, with results shared.

CAUTION: "we'll get to know her in the first few sessions."

6 How is progress measured and reported?

STRONG: named measures on a stated schedule, shared with you, instruction adjusted when data flattens.

CAUTION: "you'll see the confidence improve." Confidence is not a data point.

7 Will you coordinate with the school?

STRONG: aligns targets with the classroom and IEP goals; puts observations in writing you can bring to meetings.

CAUTION: works in a silo. Silos waste your money.

8 What would make you tell me this isn't working?

STRONG: a timeframe, a data pattern, a referral onward. Set a 10–12 week data review together at the start.

CAUTION: can't imagine their service not working. That's faith, not intervention.