



Teach your child to read

- a parent's guide.

by Marion Coulson

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marion Coulson trained as an Infant teacher in Melbourne, Australia, and had many years as a successful primary school teacher of beginning reading, interspersed with lecturing at a Teacher's College on how to teach reading.

When her daughters were young she undertook a Master of Education research study objectively assessing whether parents could teach reading to their children. Her very positive results and the enthusiasm and enjoyment of the parents involved encouraged her to continue this work, showing parents how to teach reading to their own children using the program included in this book

With the help of an Innovations Grant she was able to continue the program in a variety of schools where it was also enthusiastically received. After her appointment as a Principal of a large Primary School she continued this work encouraging parents to participate in the teaching of reading to their children at her own school for many years.

Marion is now a very proud mother of two daughters, a neuroscientist and a neurosurgeon, and four wonderful grandchildren. Her daughters, who both live interstate, asked for access to her program to assist them in teaching their preschoolers to read. So the program was resurrected, revised and retried successfully.

When the coronavirus hit the world, Marion realized that there were many parents forced to home school their children, who could find this information and program of great assistance if available on the internet, and with the help of her daughter, made this available.

SYNOPSIS

This book will:

- Give a parent the knowledge and skills to enable their child to learn to read.
- Provide ways to stimulate a high achiever to reach his or her full potential.
- Reassure a parent if they feel their child is not achieving their potential and give them the tools and knowledge to remedy this.
- Pass on the clever tricks and strategies used by Infant teachers to motivate their students.
- Give strategies for achieving co-operation from an uncooperative four or five year old.

This book contains a program of simple, fun activities that any parent can use to teach his or her child to read in a few easy stages.

It has been proved to work with hundreds of individual parents and children.

It can also be used at any stage of a child's learning to supplement school teaching, to take a child on faster, or to help a child to catch up with his peers through extra help at home.

It includes:

(1). A description of the processes involved in learning to read and much other useful information that is the stock in trade of a primary school teacher, set out in terms that a layman can understand, illustrated by examples from her experience, and

2). Samples of simple reading and phonic materials to make life easier for a parent using the program.

The program consists of simple reading material arranged sequentially, simple fun games and interesting activities, set out as a day's activities, which have been shown to actually be able to be used successfully by parents. Objective research proved that the program actually works.

It is based on the author's belief, well substantiated by observation, that parents are most effective teachers, particularly when their children are young, and the conviction that the teaching of reading is not a difficult task, and can be successfully accomplished by anyone with a little guidance

AUTHOR'S FORWARD

This book was originally written and then revised many years ago. But learning how to read has not really changed. And reading is still an essential skill. But the importance of motivation to learn is shown by the fact that almost every young person world wide has learned to text their friends and to read their messages. This book does not explore the extent of the new resources available for teaching and motivation, but they certainly exist. Please explore them yourself.

Marion Coulson BEd., BA., MEd.

WHO SHOULD USE THIS BOOK?

This book is for parents who would like to - or need to - assist their child at home to learn the essential skill of reading. For instance, if their child is not receiving the skilled teaching needed

when no teaching is available

when the teaching available is not meeting their child's needs

when they wish to home-school their child

Or when they desire to assist their child's learning because

they believe their child would benefit from further stimulation

their child is falling behind.

Or they wish to understand how their child is learning and how they can help to give their child the best opportunity to meet their fullest potential through the support and interest of a caring parent.

The book provides parents with an understanding, in layman's terms, of how a child learns to read and the skills that a skilled teacher uses. It also provides a sequential program of fun activities - tested and tried by hundreds of parents and shown to be able to be used very successfully - to develop a child's ability to read.

It also provides in very simple terms, a course for teachers of beginner readers, pre school teachers, first grade teachers, and any teacher who wishes to upgrade their understanding of the task.

And it shows how this can be great fun for both parent and child.

Use this book to develop an understanding of how your child learns to read. Develop the skills and strategies used by a good teacher to assist your child's learning with a sequential program of fun activities, tested and shown to succeed. It is easy and it is fun.

TEACH YOUR CHILD TO READ – A PARENT’S GUIDE.

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TEACH YOUR CHILD TO READ - IT'S EASY AND IT'S FUN.

CHAPTER 1 BREAKING THE CODE.

Teaching a child to read is really easy. It is basically teaching how to break a code. This is a simple straightforward task that can be taught when a child has the ability to see differences in words.

The task is to show him that a written word has meaning; just as he was taught between ages one and two that spoken words had meaning. He had to learn that the spoken word “mummy” applied to his mother, or “dog” to his pet.

He had to learn to recognize these words before he could reproduce them.

Establishing a link between the written word and meaning

The first stage of teaching reading is to establish this link between a written word and meaning. This is most easily done with the same sort of words that you used when he was learning to speak - words in his own environment - names of family members, pets, animals and the like. As with teaching him to speak they need to be words he is really interested in - family members, animals - words he finds useful so he will remember them.

He needs to learn to look at different written words and see that they are different. For this you need to find words that have very different shapes, for instance although both “cat “ and “cow” are interesting words they are much less easy to differentiate in their written form than “cat” and “hippopotamus”. You might feel that “hippopotamus” is a much more difficult word, but this would only be the case if the word is unfamiliar to your child.

Once you have built up a number of words that are easily recognized which will be almost all be nouns, you may add some verbs - “jump”, “gallop”, or “swing”, “fish”- which can be nouns and verbs.

Put words in context in sentences

The next stage is to put these words into simple sentences.

The hard part about this is that there are words in almost all sentences that we do not notice are there. These are words like “the”, “has”, “with”, “this” and “is”.

These words have to be taught in context with the nouns already established and then isolated so they can be used in a new context, “This is mummy.” “This is a hippopotamus.”, with illustrations to help.

Ability to independently work out new words

The third stage of learning to read is developing the ability to become independent of the teacher when needing to learn a new word. With young children the very strong “I can do it myself” syndrome is helpful here.

This is when phonics becomes a helpful tool. Phonics is using the sounds of letters to discover what the word is. Firstly it helps by giving a clue - Jack and Jemma both start with the same sound and letter. By the way, it is much more useful for a beginning reader to learn the sound that a letter makes rather than the name of the letter in the early stages. These sounds can then be joined together to make words.

But learning to associate a letter with a sound can be quite difficult, and firstly implies the ability to hear and differentiate sounds, at least those sounds at the beginnings of words. Then once you know what sound a letter generally makes it is still very difficult for a beginner reader to put these together and hear what the word is. I have heard countless children correctly identify and sound out the three sounds in “cat”, “c”, “a”, “t” and then say “dog” or some other quite dissimilar word. It is most frustrating to the teacher but putting the sounds that letters make together is a skill that takes practice.

But phonics is not the complete or immediate answer to learning to read English as also many words do not stick with the rules e.g. “P” for “Phillip”, or have complicated rules of combinations of sounds like “th” or “oo” or “ough.” The best way is for your child to learn to recognize quite a lot of words and then you introduce phonics, or sounding out words, to help him identify simple new words or differentiate partially known words.

Importance of a desire to read - motivation

But the most important aspect of learning to read in the long term is the desire to learn to read. In the very early stages this desire or motivation is gained almost completely from satisfaction gained by the ability to master a new skill (a very strong motivator in young children) and the praise of the adults around him for so doing.

The next stage is a desire to read a story for one’s self, and this is much more likely to occur if a child has already learned the joys to be gained from books.

The importance of motivation is often underestimated - it is most interesting to note that a whole generation of young people has learned what I find a very difficult encoding skill, that of being able to send text messages on their mobile phones (rapidly) because of the powerful effect of motivation. I don’t think that this is a writing skill taught at any school, but is universally achieved by the current generation of teenagers.

An easy task and fun

This all sounds quite simple, and it is, and you will be surprised how easy it is and how much fun. It is a new area of bonding between you and your child. The activities suggested provide fun games to do together, and you know how much enjoyment you already get reading together. It must not be serious, it is fun!

CHAPTER 2 WHY BOTHER?

Is there any value for your child?

Why bother with all this when your child is going to be taught perfectly well at school without any bother to you? Maybe it is harmful.

In my case I taught my daughters to read because they were looking for something to do and it was fun. How could I keep Lindy happy or probably more accurately - out of mischief - while I was breast feeding her younger sister, which used to take about an hour several times a day.

With Lizzie, who had a habit of not wanting to try anything until she knew she could do it well. She did not talk till she was two (her first recorded words were when she demanded "Two bickies"!). She did not suffer any ill effects from speaking late, but I was concerned that she might decide not to take on reading at school until she was assured that she could do it. She was very happy to learn a new word every day so long as she could decide which one it was.

Learning to read quickly is valuable

I believe it can be very valuable to get the early stages of learning to read over as fast as possible and have a valuable effect on later attitudes to reading.

No one can really pretend that the early stages of reading are much fun - slowly puzzling out a sentence word by word so that you forget the beginning by the time you get to the end. The stories have to be so simple that they are not much fun for the parent: "Hop Dick hop". The main motivating factor is the feeling of achievement, which is magnified by the parent or teacher expressing pleasure and astonishment at their 'brilliance'.

It is also true that children do get a lot of satisfaction from learning any skill - even if it is frustrating. Have you ever watched a child teaching itself to skip with a skipping rope, learning to bounce a ball or some other desired skill? We see the enormous amount of energy and concentration that a child can apply to something that interests him.

Have you taught yourself to ski? Or to play golf? After twenty years I still keep thinking that if I try harder and practice more my cross-country skiing will improve.

In our schools children frequently spend two or more years struggling through the early stage of reading, and understandably often develop a great dislike for the process, as well as lacking any feeling of achievement. But in my experience all those children who "crack the code" in the first six months and learn to read quite efficiently, well enough to get some enjoyment from the experience in six or nine months, are the ones who develop a love of reading. They get a real feeling of achievement, it is good for their self-image and they want to read more. As they read more they reinforce their phonics and vocabulary skills and become good at reading. When they learn at home they can learn in even less time.

They then find learning easy in all subjects and the whole process becomes self-reinforcing. Therefore I believe that if some concentrated help at the vital early stage achieves this for a child, it is probably the most valuable single thing a parent can do to advance his or her child's education.

Save private school fees!

I put it to you that spending the time and money on this program at this stage of your life -probably when you are the most busy - and could do without the extra work - could do more to save you coaching fees, private school fees- a really keen student does not need an expensive school - and also countless hours of heartache if you child "turns off" from learning.

Being in the top half of the class

It is currently a fashion to keep your child back from starting school till the next year if he is in the younger half of the year. This is supposed to be so he will not be too immature to learn to read. Firstly, in my opinion this is bunkum, as most children have all the facilities needed to learn to read by about four and a half, and six year old boys who have not been very keen to sit down and concentrate at five, tend to be even more keen to play rough games with their mates and less keen on academic pursuits at age six. In my experience the younger children are much more naive, and ready to do everything a teacher suggests and easier to motivate to learn to read than older ones. But rather than this being the main motivating force in keeping a child back. I know many parents do this because want their child to be in the top of the group and believe this will give him an edge over his mates. It may mean he will always be picked for the football team, but I am not sure it will always help his early learning.

But you can ensure he is in the top group learning wise if you give him an extra good start; before he goes to school, or, as the parents in my research study did, parallel to his first year.

Can't I just read my child stories and help out as a reading mother?

Isn't it just enough to read a story every night, hear them reading at home when they start school, buy educational toys and watch educational TV programs?

Results of my research

I was vitally interested in this question when my children were young and when I had the opportunity to do a research study for a master's degree; I tried to find the answer.

I compared the reading achievement of the children of keen, motivated parents who wanted to help their children to read but did not know how to do so, with the

achievement of children of similar parents who carried out the program set out in this book over a three months period.

I found that the children in the research group made spectacularly greater gains in learning to read than those in a matched control group over the three months period.

The parents also enjoyed the experience and this was followed by many other groups of parents who used the program in subsequent years.

When I started my research I thought that keenly motivated parents doing all the things that good parents do would probably be all that was needed to make a difference. But my results showed clearly that although these things may have beneficial effect it did not have any real effect on learning to read quickly and efficiently, but it was the use of this program made the really great difference. All the parents in both the experimental and control groups were really keen enthusiastic parents and most had much more time available than you probably have, but having some appropriate knowledge about how to teach reading was what made the real difference.

How improvement was achieved in the study

The study looked at the achievement of both children from privileged homes and children from disadvantaged homes using the program. I expected that the children with parents from the privileged background would, as found in many other studies, provide a more helpful and stimulating background for school learning. And it was true that these children all had higher results. But there was no significant difference in the improvement between the two groups. Both improved equivalently although the high socioeconomic status group started from a higher level.

Another interesting test was a comparison of the children of parents who volunteered (excluding the experimental group) compared with the children of non-volunteers. To my surprise no difference was found.

Reason for this book

This book was written to give any parent who would like to help their child to read earlier or faster the tools to do so easily and having lots of fun. It is based on a program that was shown to work in a research study, and comes with a guarantee that it also has worked with thousands of parents and children.

In the research study it was used with children who had just started school - and it is most suitable to supplement what is being taught at school. Starting with the preliminary sessions it has also been successfully used for children starting to read from scratch before they start school.

I don't want to be a "pushy" mother.

You may feel that you do not want to be part of the current over-competitive push to have your child the best, and you will leave your child to cope in the school system provided.

It is interesting to observe that, even thirty years ago the interest shown by such very high proportions of parents volunteering for the program then, would suggest that if you are not interested you are quite unusual. And this was not just parents in the leafy suburbs, but right across the spectrum.

You may feel you need to take some control of your child's learning

The control of your child's learning is now in the hands of your child's teacher. They may be good, bad or indifferent. They may interact exceptionally well with your child or clash.

If your child is a potential high achiever.

Your child's teacher is not likely to be keen to push a high achiever beyond the bounds of the average. She is kind and egalitarian. She is much more likely to be keen to see that all children reach a good basic level. High achievers can cope by themselves. Many teachers were not themselves high achievers and are not particularly sympathetic to high achiever needs.

You as a parent have to fill the gap!

Is your average child reaching his full potential?

The answer is probably not. And unless you have some knowledge about what learning is occurring, and what could be occurring, you cannot know or do anything about it. This program can help you to get involved with your own child's learning!

Your child's teacher gets better results than you can do.

This is because they have all sorts of simple tricks of the trade. Use this program to develop some of these yourself.

And if you must teach your child at home?

Many parents prefer to home-school their children. But they will be much more successful teachers of reading if they understand the processes involved in learning to read.

And these days of corona virus, many parents may be required to teach their children at home. Parents may be given help, but will not be equipped with a real understanding of what they are doing at the early and incredibly important stages of beginning reading.

This book basically provides a simple course in the teaching of beginning reading with simple, practical, interesting, child based activities to carry this out set out as lesson plans to help parents.

CHAPTER 3 WHAT IS THE SKILL OF READING

Background information for parents

You can teach your child to read now. Just turn to the weekly sessions in Chapter 5 and follow the simple instructions carefully.

This chapter is for you if you want to understand what you are actually doing and why. It should help you to do a better job and also enable you to modify the program to better suit your child if necessary.

Teaching a child to read is **NOT DIFFICULT**, nor very time consuming, nor complicated. That is the first thing to remember.

Re-teaching a child who is eight or ten years old and has failed to learn in the previous three or four years because of inadequate teaching or no teaching at all because of changing schools at the crucial time, or other problems, is not easy at all.

How soon can they learn?

A normally intelligent child of about two is quite able to differentiate between the visual patterns of words, and if highly motivated by his parents, quite able to learn to read. Doman proved this with his kit and program - "Teach your baby to read" which sold well, and is still selling.

But a child of two does not use words in proper sentences very confidently and does not have the ability to really grasp a story if he could read it to himself.

Therefore I believe it is a waste of time to do more than introduce your child to words in their written form at this stage, because there is no real use to which he could put this skill.

How does a child read? How do we read?

When I have a line of print in front of me I glance along it stopping three or four times and through this I understand what it is saying.

A mature reader doesn't look at each word individually.

If you do not believe this ask your partner to read half a page of print and watch his eyes. You can see the eyes move along the line of print with two to five brief pauses, then switch back to the beginning of the next line.

An efficient and fast reader has a minimum of pauses, each taking in several words with no regressions. Even a fast reader does not need to go back to any word to check it was read correctly.

This means that every time our eyes stop for a brief fraction of a second, if we are efficient readers, we take in a long word or group of words.

It is possible to train our eyes to increase their effectiveness at this task and move more quickly with less pauses taking in larger groups of words. Training to achieve this is included as part of rapid reading courses through which mature readers can increase the speed and efficiency of reading.

Recognizing words by their shape

What happens when my eyes stop and focus on that group of words for a fraction of a second? I recognize the words within my field of view basically by their shape, helped by familiarity and meaning and in the context of what I am reading.

Therefore if a word is left out, or there is a typing error, or a word you do not expect to see; I am not likely to notice it. For example if I see the sentence:

“ A bird is singing in the three.” - I would be likely to read it as **“A bird is singing in the tree.”**

I have dozens of typing errors while typing this that only the “spell check” finds.

Watch a young reader reading

If you watch even a young reader, you will find that he or she makes more pauses than you do, initially on individual words, but the amount of time is only a fraction of a second. What is happening when this young reader glances at each word?

He is recognizing it by its shape, familiarity and the context in which it is found.

Teaching a child to recognize a word by shape.

When we teach a child to read, the first thing we need to do is to teach him that he can recognize written words just as easily by their shape as he can spoken words by their sound.

It is important to start with words that are easily differentiated. For many years the first three words I taught my Prep grade children were **“ aeroplane ”**, **“doll”** and **“truck”**.

These three words have very different visual patterns and I can't remember a child ever having difficulty differentiating them. But if I had tried to include **“ball”** and **“brick”** as well, many children at this stage would immediately confuse **“ball”** with **“doll”** and **“truck”** with **“brick”**. Although you might say that **“aeroplane”** is long complicated word, it is a very easy word to recognize because of its quite distinctive visual pattern - and you could even imagine that the pattern looks like an aeroplane with a long body and two wings.

Using letter clues

In differentiating and recognizing the shape of a word, children will very soon begin to use the visual clues provided by the particular letters within the words (even if they do not know what sound these letters make). For instance a child will remember **“Jane”** easily by recognizing the initial capital letter. But if a

beginner reader is shown the word “**James**”, it would almost certainly be identified as “**Jane**” also.

Upper Projections of letters are most used

In Britain in the 80’s someone designed a new phonetic alphabet, including a new series of symbols for all the sounds like “th”, to make our English language more logical and able to be sounded out. The new alphabet was called the Initial Teaching Alphabet and it was widely used to teach reading for a few years.

However to simplify the learner’s inevitable return to the normal alphabet, the designer’s of the new alphabet endeavored to make changes which would not interfere with the pattern of words as we know them.

They were able to demonstrate very clearly that it is the upper projections of a word that is most noticeable, and so long as this is not changed we can recognize a word even though it includes considerable changes such as additional letters.

Covering up the top and then the bottom of the sentence below demonstrates this.

This is an umbrella.

First and last letters

It can be claimed that it is the first and last letter only that matter in recognizing a word - not only in English but in other languages.

According to a researcher at Cambridge University, it doesn’t matter in what order the letters in a word are, the only important thing is that the first and last letter be at the right place. The rest can be a total mess and you can still read it without a problem. This is because the human mind does not read every letter by itself, but the word as a whole.

or rather...

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(I think this is an internet joke - not real research - but it makes a good point.)

First Stage - recognizing words by their shape

When we are teaching a child to read, the first thing we must teach is that reading words is just recognizing them by their shape.

As all different words are in fact different in shape, this is really all one needs to know about reading. Once a child really understands this, it may be possible just to tell him what a new word says, providing each word as needed, and a child with a good visual memory will remember each word and will soon be reading efficiently, even working out new words from the pattern of words he knows.

“Sight word” method of teaching reading

There is considerable criticism of teaching by the “sight word” method suggesting that it is much less effective than the old fashioned phonic or alphabet method.

But you need to realize that the “look- say method” or “sight word method” is rarely used as sole method of teaching reading, but rather as an introductory method to be followed by much phonic and alphabet work.

It makes it possible for an early reader to read sentences and books from an early stage. And the only way to teach many irregular words is by this method.

Words make up sentences

A child must soon become aware that words make sentences, or that sentences are made up of individual words. Most children by the age of three or four or even two understand that they use verbal names for things, and it is easy to teach a child that things can have a written name. But before a child can read a sentence he must know that, for instance the statement “Gimmeadrink” is really “Give me a drink”. It is relatively easy to hear the verbs and nouns in a sentence, but much more difficult to hear such small words as “**and**”, “**a**” or “**the**” which children often don’t even realize are in a sentence. These words are therefore very difficult for a child to remember and recognize.

Teach words in phrases and sentences

A child can now be introduced to the written sentences and phrases.

For instance the words “**this**” and “**is**” are two very difficult words to teach in isolation. But it is very easy indeed to make up a book of illustrations and label each page - “**This is daddy.**” “**This is my baby brother.**” And teach the child to recognize the pattern of the two words “**This is**”. Later they can learn these two words individually.

Remembering new words

When you are teach a very new learner a new word, you can just tell him “That word says “**aeroplane**” and expect he will remember it. But after some time - if it is not used a great deal - he would tend to forget it.

So you have to teach him a method of learning new words very early.

Basically the simplest method is matching the new word with a reference word.

To teach the words “**aeroplane**” and “**doll**” I would have two or more cards with each word printed very large and clearly. I would tell a child what the words said, then I would pin one copy on a real (toy) aeroplane and he other on a doll - that is at the very early stages of teaching words, later I would just use pictures with the word written underneath it.

We would then play games with the other copies of the word. (See Chapter 5 activities 1-6 for the types of games)

If a child could not remember which card he was looking at he could carry it over and compare it with the card pinned to the toy and find out by matching it against the label. Later I would give him smaller copies of the word to identify, again by matching it and comparing it with the card he already knows. He would have something to refer to if ever he forgot the word or hesitated about it.

In the early stages of the program we also use books with sentences and pictures as reference **points**.

Words must be interesting and familiar

Children learn to read words that are interesting to them, easily. The words “doll” and “aeroplane” were not only easily recognized by shape but are of considerable interest to my Preps and are very familiar. It is easier to teach “**helicopter**” than “**dishwasher**” or “**hippopotamus**” than “**hen**” for example.

Sam had no trouble recognizing all of his Thomas the Tank Engines by sight and name - I have trouble even recognizing they are different! Make real use of such interests or obsessions?

Words must be familiar

If you were trying to teach the word “refrigerator” as a very early word, your child would recognize it easily by the shape, but many children would forget its full name and call it “**fridge**”, the word they use more frequently. For example if you are trying to teach the word “**kitten**” be sure that this is the word your child normally uses for your cat - not “**cat**” or “**puss**”.

Innumerable times I have been going through a pile of word cards with a child to see how many he can remember and we would come to a difficult one and he would say “That’s the one I can’t remember”. He would recognize it by its shape but would not be able to put a name to it.

So, to teach a word firstly try to make sure it is a familiar word; if not, prepare for it by reading a story where it is used frequently for instance. Then let the child say the word clearly many times to impress its meaning on his mind while he is looking at the word meaningfully - for example matching it with similar words or comparing it with different ones.

You will find that words that are really meaningful are those he remembers most easily. A New Zealand teacher of Mauri children has developed a very successful reading scheme, using words with highly emotional overtones and what might be called “gut words” from her young Mauri children’s vocabulary, to combat their lack of interest in learning to read.

If your four year old has a new pet rabbit/ lizard/ guinea pig/ bantam, the word “**rabbit**” or “**lizard**” etc and/or the pet’s name would be of real interest and there would never be any trouble remembering that word because of the powerful association it would have. But if you introduced the word very casually (in the early stages) and it is never really reinforced or tied to an experience or object, that will be word that always causes trouble.

How fast can you go?

Not too fast at first!!! Don't be too impatient or overestimate your child's progress.

For the first few words I think it is best for a beginner to learn just one word a day, well reinforced by experiences, such as drawing pictures about the new word or doing activities. When you work together to bake a cake, "cake" would be a good word. This can be increased to two or three words a day after some time with most children as they grasp the method of learning new words.

Sentences

The second stage of reading is to use the words your child has learned in some meaningful way - that is in a sentence.

The words selected soon need to include some verbs (doing words- can, jump, see) and articles (the, a) and prepositions (with, from, to) so it is possible to construct sentences as soon as possible.

You may be very impatient with the writers of very early readers for children, for the lack of interest in their stories, "Nip runs up" "Nip runs down". You may think surely the story could have more interest. But try it yourself. Try to make up an interesting story that gives your child an opportunity to read words that he knows and are repeated frequently for practice when he only knows a very few words and you are only teaching one a day! If you find it easy you should get a job writing readers!

Try to write an interesting story using only 20 or 30 words, no more, particularly not prepositions or pronouns or even plurals, or even 50 or 100 words and see how far you get.

Really reading a real book all by himself!

You may be asking, why don't you just give a child a book straight away and let him learn the words from the book. With a beginner reader I think that this is not the best way.

It is much more exciting for the child to teach him all the words he will need to know to read a "real" book, then give him the book to read. He then finds that he can read all by himself, he can really read! He is then very eager to try his next book. He finds out the difference between actually reading the words and reading the pictures.

You may believe your child can already read simple books. You only have to read it once or twice to him and he can read it back to you.

In the days when we had one first reader in use in all Victorian schools, I had many parents come to me and tell me that their child could already read his first "John and Betty" reader, he had read his sister's old one.

Now in a few cases this may have been real reading, but in many cases his sister had read her reader so frequently to her small brother, showing him the pictures,

that in no time at all he could remember every word, particularly assisted by the pictures. But if you watched Johnny's eyes, he was look looking only at the pictures. This is a valuable part of pre-reading, but it is not reading. Reading is when a child can see those words and sentences away from the picture, and in fact in a completely different context, but still can recognize each word and read them to make a meaningful sentence.

Lindy wrote: It was a real challenge to get my daughter to look at the words. She was so good at guessing and remembering that it wasn't until I wrote some unpredictable things that I realized she wasn't reading.

She had no problems with "Mummy is a girl or "The giraffe is in the boat". But to read "Mummy is a boy" or Daddy is a giraffe" took about fifteen tries, because she kept guessing what it ought to have read.

Next stage - using a book

Once a bright child has learned how to recognize words and learned what reading is all about, and a read a few books with all the vocabulary taught to him before he starts, I believe he can be given a book with quite a few new words, but plenty of ones he knows, where these words are repeated frequently with good picture clues, with lots of guessing, and the help of a cooperative adult, he can teach himself by reading and re-reading that book. But that comes after the first reader or readers.

Where does phonics come in?

Some of you may have been thinking while you waded through all these pages "But I'm sure the best way to learn to read is to learn how to spell out the letters or sound the letters."

But this is best taught after a child understands what reading a word means. If whole words are not introduced first a child does not really know what a written word is. He does not know that it is something that has meaning so he why should he work at it to get the meaning.

Few children find sounding out words as easy as recognizing whole words, but they are very happy to learn how to find out words by themselves without having to ask an adult. The real weakness of teaching children by word recognition is that a child is almost totally dependent on being taught new words before they can read them. Learning the alphabet or phonics as it is called means that they can gradually become independent.

One does not become independent immediately because there are so many different letter combinations to learn and so many words are irregular.

I can actually remember trying to read my first real book. I had been at school for just a few weeks when I had my tonsils out, as all children did in those days. I had to spend the night in hospital, and can remember that very lonely night in the hospital balcony ward alone with a new quite grown up story book I had been given, as my only comfort. I was being taught by a pure phonic method and I can still remember puzzling over that book, trying to sound the words out to get

the story, word by word till I got to the bottom of the first page and halfway down he next, in tremendous frustration because of the number of words I couldn't figure out, before I gave up. I can still see those pages!

Young reader must move to recognizing phonic words

The main reason for teaching by both methods is the vagaries of the English language and the fact that many words cannot be sounded out logically - they must be recognized. But also, although sounding out words is a method of discovering new words, once a word is sounded out several times it is important that the readers learns to recognize it again when he meets it again.

I have worked with children with very poor visual memories in remedial groups, and for them a phonics approach is essential. However even when you are reading a reader that is purely phonic, it is almost most impossible to get any meaning from it if you need to sound the word out every time you meet it. The eventual aim is to become sufficiently familiar with the word to remember and recognize it as a word.

Using phonic skill to provide clues

In the early stages of learning to read, the knowledge of what sound the letters most commonly make provide many clues to guessing a barely remembered word, to differentiate between similar words, and to identify changes of tense, plurals, the addition of the possessive and such like. ("s" is a very valuable letter/sound to teach early as it comes in handy so often!)

"Look say" versus "phonics" debate

I remember reading about an experiment to try and resolve the old debate about which method was preferable. One group of children was taught phonetically only and the other by word recognition methods.

It was found that those children who were taught through carefully selected phonic material which they could logically sound out, were at a complete disadvantage when they later had to attempt reading more difficult material, compared with the children who had learned to recognize words. And the reason suggested for this was that they had developed an expectation that the words in our language would be logical, that they could work them out, where as the other children learned that reading was a mixture of memory and figuring it out plus a large amount of guesswork.

And this is something that you always must remember. When you see "**read**" you don't know whether it is pronounced "red" or "reed" until you see it in context. When a child sees "**knob**" or "**lamb**" in a sentence, the word recognition student guesses that you leave out the unnecessary letter, because it makes much more sense.

So although "just guessing" may be frowned on in mathematics, it is an essential aspect of the skill of reading.

CHAPTER 4 VERY FIRST WORDS

Teaching reading from scratch

This part of the program is designed to cater particularly for anyone starting to teach their child from scratch, e.g. child who is ready to begin to learn to read possibly from about age three and a half.

But if that if your child finds it too hard because he is too young or not ready, take it very gently or leave it for a couple of months and concentrate on pre reading activities.

If you begin here, don't expect your three year old to be writing sentences unaided in twelve weeks. But he could be reading sentences and simple phonic readers.

Aim of this activity

You are actually aiming to teach your child's to recognize his first words.

Starting out.

This session gives pretty clear suggestions, but always modify them to suit your situation.

Don't do this session now if there is a problem - your partner is grumpy about it, your baby is having his six o'clock yell, your preschooler wants his tea. Get off to a good start or you may never come back to it again!

All you will need is a double set of card with your names on them.

Every week you will need a good supply of small rectangular cards. They can be larger - like 220x80mm if you have lots of them available, but smaller ones, 20x80 mm, are fine. Once you decide on a size, make all the cards the same size or your child will remember that "is" is the short card and "aeroplane" the long card, without even looking at the shape of the word.

If possible try to locate a local printer. They always have lots of cardboard off-cuts which are marvelous as they also save the trouble of cutting too. Otherwise there are lots of things, like sock's packets, the inside of nappy packets, or even cereal boxes, that can provide good cards.

Learning his own name

I am presuming that your child already can recognize his own name or at least has seen it often.

But if you think this needs more practice make sure you have it written large frequently - above his bed, on his lunch box, on all his drawings and paintings. Draw his attention to it and the letters in it. Get him to trace it with his finger. Cut it up and get him to put it together again, copying a model.

This will mean that at least one of the words in session 1 is familiar. Don't start session 1 until it is.

Preliminary activity: introducing words

What you will need:

The child to recognize their own name (see above)

Three or four people including the child you are introducing to words - cooperative members of the family, other adults.

Cards with the names of the people printed on them, at least two of each card. e.g. **mummy daddy Jack Sam** (including his own name)

Don't forget use lower case letters! (Except for the initial letter).

If these people are really not available, use photos of some well-known and loved people. It is a good idea anyway to make a reference card for each of these words with a photo or just a drawing (perhaps by your child) - with their names underneath for future revision (written the same size as your cards). That way you can work with the reference cards if it is hard to get the family together again!

What to do:

Game: matching name cards to the right person.

"We are going to play a game with cards and we are going to each have our own card with our name on it." You then give every one their own name card and they hold it so it can be seen.

Ask everyone to read his or her card.

Ask you beginner reader to read everyone's card. He might like to trace over each card.

Then produce four more cards with the same names written on them.

Ask your child to see if he can give everyone their own proper name card. If he just gives out any card you can say "Is this the same as my card? Look at it carefully. See if you can find one that is just the same as my card". (Holding it up the right way helps).

Keep going until he can give everyone their card and then give him much applause.

Put the cards back in the middle and ask him to try again. More clapping and praise.

Game: "Hide and seek" with the cards - then give the card to the right person

Now you could hide the cards around the room- behind the chairs or sofa - not too hard to find because the main task is to find the card and then work out who it belongs to and, after checking the cards they are holding, give it to the right person.

Now someone else can have a turn of hiding the cards, and the beginner reader who is the centre of attention and loving this, can have another go at finding them and delivering them to the right person. He will soon get very good at this - but don't go on to make it harder e.g. adding more cards - this is enough for one session.

Repeat in a couple of days

Try this again next day or in a couple of days - don't expect he will be sure to remember each name. Be very careful not to be critical if he doesn't, but just go through the same procedure.

NOTE: Don't ever put him in the embarrassing position of having to say he can't tell you the name on the card - there always should be something to which he can refer to work it out.

Extension Game: "Which hand will you have?"

Have a card in each hand behind your back. Let him choose one hand to see, and if he says the word right, he can have the card. When he has several cards, he has a turn. You say most words offered correctly, asking if you are correct. Say some select words – like his name – incorrectly and ask if you are correct.

Using only reference cards

The whole session can be (re)done with pictures for reference rather than a person, or toys or pets or different Thomas the Tank engine trains, but it will be much harder to get the level of interest which may be necessary to introduce a completely new concept if it does not particularly grab your child.

Continue to Practice these words

Because these names are likely to be those you will use frequently it is quite important to make sure that once they have been established and known they are not forgotten. So go through the pile of cards every now and then to make sure they are remembered. Use them in the games introduced in the second set of activities.

What are you doing?

You are teaching the most basic skill of learning to read. You are teaching your child to look really carefully at the shape and composition of a word and then remember what that particular shape means.

Some traps

Try to have names that are not too similar. Even "grandad" and "grandma" are quite difficult as they are very similar. "mummy" and "daddy" or "mum" and "dad" are good because they don't have initial capital letters and the child has to

look further than just the first letter to identify the word. Be careful to have the form of the name that your child normally uses - e.g. "**Lizzie**" rather than "**Elizabeth**" if that is what she most commonly uses.

Four words, including his own name, already partly known, is the right level to start at. If you only have three people, you can use a pet if it is reasonably cooperative - you might have to tie the card around the cat's neck.

But don't forget this is not supposed to be solemn, but lots of fun, if you can make it so.

CHAPTER 5 PROGRAM OF ACTIVITIES - GETTING STARTED

How do we start? By playing school

Playing school was always a favorite activity at our place and I have found few children who don't love it particularly with a willing adult participant. Even when it is a child's full time occupation most five year olds find it a most enthralling occupation.

So introduce the program as playing school together with equal turns of all the activities including being the teacher. Don't make it serious, though don't let it get too continually boisterous; you can use your imagination and be a naughty boy occasionally and let the teacher show you what happens at pre-school or day care or school when that occurs.

First session at our place

When my husband John and daughter Lindy sat down to play school, John, all six foot of him, had his turn of teacher first, somewhat tentatively. He then offered Lindy a turn as teacher. Our small daughter who had always called her father "daddy" hopped up on the chair, completely in control and started off "Right-e-oh John, sit down and cross your legs!" She then proceeded to give him a perfect writing lesson, (which he needed), obviously copied exactly from her teacher. He was much more efficient when he had his next turn!

Our most frequent trouble was that it was almost impossible to get it finished by anything like bedtime!

Get your equipment ready

Although you may have most of the things suggested for the exercises below, it is of utmost importance to have it at hand when you need it. I cannot stress this too much.

Although the total cost of the equipment needed is not great, you may find getting it together is rather time consuming. I'd love to be able to provide you with a kit.

If you need some motivation, I would also suggest that for your child shopping for or organizing into a "reading kit" a new piece of chalk, bottle of clay or sticky tape, a balloon, and a new exercise book can be an exciting occurrence and is motivating for a less interested child.

By the way, some of the simple things suggested, like clay, plasticine or playdough, a stapler, are much more interesting to a five year old than some 21 century expensive toys.

Record Sheets

In my original study when I presented my research plan to my supervisor, he said “How do you propose to measure whether the participants in the study will in fact do any of the things you suggest? How can you show that the mothers have in fact spent time with their children?”

I then devised a simple record sheet for use against this possibility. It provided space for sticking on stars - a motivational device or straight out reward for cooperation by the child. It also provided a space for checking out how much time was spent and comments on the activities.

You will be glad to know that in fact the mothers did do the activities and spent an average of more than two hours a week on the program in that first study.

Since that time I have worked with many groups of parents with no specific attempt to measure the amount of participation or evaluate the effect of the program. However we all found that the record sheet has value in itself! It was a motivational device for both mother and child!

In fact a couple of times my children have come across old records sheets in the study and have pestered me to use them again, to check out how much time I spent with them, how much I helped them with their work, how much time they spent on reading, homework, music practice, or a multitude of other things.

Finding time

One of the most important elements of the program is that you discipline yourself to actually put aside time to devote specifically to one child. I believe that children have a right to this time from their parents but we are all so busy that we never give our children the time we believe we should. In fact you will probably be horrified if you actually measure this time, how little it is. The record sheet is a simple device to check this out and a reminder when you haven't kept yourself up to your own expectations.

Your child will keep it for you and keep you up to your promise.

If you don't use the sheets suggested, use a calendar on the back of your child's door, with a packet of stars beside it so you can stick something there when he has done some good work, or even a big tick with a red pen. It is the symbol that counts.

Siblings

What if you have more than one small child? I believe it is much better to work with just the one child on this if at all possible. I also understand the real jealousies that develop when you spend more time with one than another. Get your partner to do something else with the other child(ren) at the time you are doing the program.,

Could I say that spending the time closely involved with your child can be of inestimable value to the child and yourself. Many parents, and fathers particularly last century, don't really know what to talk about with their young children.

This program can give you a framework in which to develop a close relationship.

If you have more than one child you may be able to make it up to an older child by spending time every second night sitting on his bed talking, revising tables or something of the sort, or reading to your younger child. Quite a few mothers worked with their two or three year old at the same time as their five year old and reported it was satisfactory.

Efficiency

Remember when you are doing this program that you are much more efficient than a teacher with a full class of children. Your child has a turn at the game at least every second time, and he has one to one attention.

Self-discipline

I suggest if you have someone else you can do the program with, if you can get together even irregularly (or on Facetime) it would be helpful, otherwise you will have to be very disciplined.

When I undertook these activities with my second daughter I was a particularly busy "working mum", a vice principal at a big school. I was also leading several groups of mothers at other schools. Without the motivation of the weekly meetings and the moral strength and encouragement given to me by the other mothers I could never have maintained anything like a regular program with my daughter. Although I always had the best of intentions it was so much easier to say "Time for bed, dear" and read the evening paper - or even just start to clean up the dinner dishes.

But don't give up if you can only get to it occasionally; It is amazing what undertaking even some of the program can achieve.

Establishing a working procedure

The following activities provide quite detailed suggestions about both WHAT to teach and practice with your child, and HOW to go about it. You may have to modify both the how and the what to suit your particular child and his stage of development and both your personalities and ways of working. However, all the activities have been tried and found to work by large numbers of parents working with their own individual child, so give them a try.

The activities are geared to learning to read, but include many different methods of assisting your child in this task. One thing I learned from observing individual parents with their own children was that children have many differences in the way they wished to learn, and this could be catered for in a one to one approach.

So be sensitive to which things work best with your child and do more of those activities.

Activities are planned for three or four days of each week.

Try to set aside a small amount of time each day, rather than a long period in one or two days.

All parents involved in the initial study plus the author always found it hard to find the time which should not be more than 15 to 20 minutes a session. even though it should not be more than a 15 to 20 minutes a session. ?

But when they were going well, the children would ask/pester the parent to do a session

What if your child does not want to do the activities?

If your child is reluctant to do any activity, do not keep him at it for more than five minutes, you may be able to try again/continue it later.

If your child is continually uninterested or refuses to do an activity, you may get around this by offering some form of reward - for example the reading of a story when it is done, the use of some new material, or making it an alternative to going straight to bed. But mostly this can be overcome by making a really fun game of it, playing school and letting him be the teacher first and you the child, giving him plenty of control and lots of your attention.

Try to keep something new for each special time with him. Don't let his sister read the new book to him before you have time to read it.

You must keep it informal and happy and not a chore for your child. The informal atmosphere of playing school or kinder where more than half of the time may be spent playing is likely to be of more value in the long run than a serious but unhappy period of hard work. However don't let it be all play.

How do you get cooperation from a reluctant five year old? See Chapter 8 for more suggestions.

Values of program

One of the possible achievements in an individual situation is training in concentration, and concentration is of utmost importance in learning situations. It should be your aim to gradually stretch your child span of concentration into longer and longer periods.

This will be more successful if you try to make sure that the task is not too difficult, well within his reach, yet a sufficient challenge to extend him. You may have to change the task to fit this requirement, by breaking it up into steps or making it more difficult.

Reading stories as integral part of the program

It is strongly suggested that you also read at least one story each day to your child, as well as doing the activities, maybe initially as a reward.

Record sheets and stars

Get into a habit of using these as part of your positive reinforcement.

Get your equipment ready

The provision of the appropriate equipment is a very important problem. In the initial research study all equipment needed was provided to the participants weekly. I would love to do that but it is impractical.

I have included material that can be printed/photocopied, and much of the material suggested you will have, but it is often motivating to provide something new. You need to prepare carefully - it is very frustrating to start a session, for example to make a book and find you do not have something to stick the pictures on with, or a stapler to make a proper book. You can compromise - sticky tape will do.

So for every session the equipment needed is listed at the beginning, but I suggest that you look a few days or weeks ahead and get things you will need. Otherwise if you are like me, you will be held up when you have the perfect moment, because you are not ready.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED FOR ALL THE ACTIVITIES

•The equipment needed for each day's activities is listed at the beginning of the instructions.

These are suggestion for general equipment that would be helpful and needed frequently.

1. Books: firstly picture books from the local children's library. If you are not a member of your local council library, it is easy to join with proof of your current address and photo identification or proof of signature. Most librarians allow pre-school children to borrow and I would start this as early as when your child is twelve months old if you can.

Secondly find out where your nearest educational bookseller is located. Ask at your local school or look in the telephone directory - they are not easy to find. Try to make time to have a really good browse among the pre-readers and very simple readers sometime. They are generally very happy to sell to parents but will not have much advice. These days there are a lot of things like phonic readers for sale on the internet.

2... A small stapler and a good pair of scissors.

3 A good supply of cardboard and paper. Reams of printer paper can be purchased at the supermarket, newsagents or OfficeWorks relatively cheaply. For cardboard, you can use cereal packets or shoe boxes or try an art and craft store.

4 A thick spirit pen, black.

When writing for your child to read, any plain (non cursive) font style is fine. (I use "helvetica" on my computer and for this book.) You can ask at your local school to get a copy of your state's writing style and teach yourself to use it if you wish.

It is important to remember that teaching all names and words in lower case, rather than capitals (except for the capital at the beginning of names) is essential. You need to remember that words in lower case are much more varied in shape than capitals and therefore always much easier to read. (I am surprised that the people making street signs do not often take this into consideration!)

Some general hints on writing are: go slowly, keep your letters very close together and words well spaced. Use a black texta that has a thicker line for a clearer mark. Size of the letters should be much larger than you generally use as an adult when writing (about 80 pt on a computer). Or print out the words on your computer quite large.

5. Record sheets and reward stickers.

Make your records sheets. And you can buy some lovely shiny gold stars. *Or as Jemma suggested to me - use the stickers from the apples!*

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS TO ACTIVITY 1

All the activities in Activity 1 are related to learning to recognize words by matching them to another identical word.

All the words need to be clearly different in shape.

All the words need to be well known and include the few words you introduced initially.

If you are working with a child who already has been introduced to reading at school, you can do these activities with a very simple book you already have, or make a simple one with a few more words. If a word gives trouble at this stage, discard it. There needs to be lots of success at this stage.

Collect the material for this week and store it in an old envelope or folder with Activity 1 on it!

- Make a simple book like Jemma or Sam's "This is" book, or photo copy either of these and staple them together! They will be fine, though not quite as good as one written about your own child - but you can't be a perfectionist always!
- A good supply of small rectangular cards. They can be larger - like 20 x 8 cm (~1/3rd of an A4 sheet) if you have lots of card available, but smaller ones, 2 x 8 cm, are fine. Once you decide on a size, make all the cards the same size or your child will remember that "is" is the short card and "aeroplane" is the long card, without even looking at the shape of the word.
- black texta
- Record sheets
- Reward stickers. You can buy some lovely shiny gold stars. Or as Jemma suggested to me - use the stickers from the apples!

The first week's work is mainly to set a pattern of interaction and interest. There is more than you can do in 15 or 20 minutes together with revision. Revision is always valuable, but don't try to introduce something new after 35 minutes of revision and expect it to be greeted with full enthusiasm.

The work with simple readers is establishing a method for teaching new words at any early level, and can be adapted for any child. I have only included it here once, but it can be used often.

If you are doing this with a child who is already at school, playing school is most fun, and you should take the lead from your child about what you do at school - sit with your legs crossed, fold your hands, put your hands up etc - as they do it at your child's school.

Day 3 introduces a game that is one of the simplest games that can be used for revising words. In this case, it is used for practicing word recognition, and for looking at each word several times until it is well known.

The same game can be used with innumerable minor alterations to revise single letters, numbers, sums or spelling

ACTIVITY 1 DAY 1 READING A SIMPLE READER

WHAT YOU WILL NEED TO MAKE:

- Word cards: names of the four members of your family you used in the first session.

e.g. **This is** (both words on the one card) **Sam Jack** (or your child's and his sibling's names) **mummy daddy and** (this word I too hard to use begin with.)

- A simple pre reader using your computer and digital camera.

Make your own simple reader or pre reader with very few words, very few pages, and large writing and pictures illustrating the text using four known words and only three others. See sample "Sam's book"

"This is Sam."

"This is Jack."

This is Sam and Jack."

"This is mummy and Jack."

"This is Sam and daddy."

"This is Sam and Jack and mummy and daddy ."

New words: **This is mummy daddy**

Note : **"This is"** should be treated as just one word initially.

You can use "Sam's book" but preferably make your own. Then you can use "Sam's book" in addition on day two or three with most of the same words, only needing to teach new words **"Sam"** and **"Jack"**

- Make paper strips with the sentences from the book on them.
- Make cards with the important words in the book on them.
- Prepare a page with all the words in the book on it.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Establish your playing school procedure. For these sessions with a beginner reader, the pupil sitting on the floor and the teacher sitting on a low chair is a good set up.. You must take turns being teacher.

1. Revise the first words you have taught
Use names of the members of your family.
2. Play "Hide the word" or "Which hand will you have?" to practice those words.
3. Read the new book as a story.
Maybe read it a couple of times to make sure you establish the words as they are written. It is important to point to the words as you read. Let him read the words that he knows - get excited about that!
4. Take turns reading each page.
5. Ask your child to read the whole book to you (He is teacher). Ask him to point to the words as he reads.
Pointing to the words can be difficult - it is like counting and it is very hard for a child to slow down enough to point to each object when he counts (he has only touched six objects but he has already got to ten), and so it is with words.
6. Look at a sentence card. e.g. **"This is Sam"**
Can you find the page which is the same?
Match the card to all pages until you find the right one. Then read both sentences. Repeat with other cards.
7. Look at individual words in the sentences
Start with the easy ones.
Can you find the word that says "Sam", "Jack" (or preferably your own child's name if you have made a new book.)
8. Find individual words
Try finding an individual word, using a word card. Look on every page until you find it. Repeat with another word. If this has gone well try to find "and" - a hard one - look for all the "and" words and read the sentences to find them. (You can save up "This is" until next time unless he is very keen and sure of the others.)
9. Read all the words on the back page
If this has gone well try reading all the words on the back page.
Don't tell your child the word, get him to look back at the story to find what it is - establishing this method.
10. Do the record sheet
Put a star on the record sheet for good work (even if the work was disappointing.)
11. The work in this session can be repeated casually when your child to reads the book to his brother, father (pointing to the words) or anyone else he can find.
12. Repeat this session to establish these words, then you can use this method whenever you want to introduce to introduce new words.

METHOD:

1. Establish, the meaning of the word with a picture.

2. Isolate the word on a card and match it with the word below the picture.
3. Look at the word without the picture (i.e. in a game). Your child can match it with the word under the picture if he cannot remember it. Reward (praise, feelings of achievement) when correct.
4. Extra reward if correct without matching it.

ACTIVITY 1 DAY 2 MAKING A SIMPLE READER TOGETHER

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

- Four or five sheets of A4 paper and a stapler
- A texta pen (or do this on your computer - print it out and paste it on)
- A magazine where you will find pictures of things familiar to your child - e.g a baby, an animal, a house or (expendable) photos of family, pets, toys etc- even better.
- Cards or paper to write the words and sentences.
- Clag or sticky tape to stick the picture on to your page

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Establish your playing school procedure again.

1. Read the first book again
Play "Which hand will you have?" with the cards.
2. Start to make your own (2nd) book. I suggest that this be a "This is" book
Write "**This is**" large on the front page.
Find a picture,
Cut or **tear it out and stick it on your page 1.**
Write "This is a baby." or whatever underneath the picture.
You must agree on the label - If he says "**This is a kitty.**", don't write "**This is a cat.**"
Both of you read the writing pointing to the words.
3. Make about four or five pages similarly. (that is, 4 or 5 new noun words)
4. Ask your child to read the whole book to you - he is teacher.
Look at individual words particularly "**This is**" in the sentences starting with the easy ones. Can you find the word that says "**baby**".
Can you find the words that say "**This is**" ?
5. Make a list of all the words in the book.
See which ones you can find (or if he prefers it , write or print out the sentences to match with the ones in the book.)
Make cards for the ones he is interested in.
6. Match them with word and sentence cards if sufficient interest and time as for day 1.
7. Don't forget the record sheet and star
Give more than one for really good work, rather than none for non-cooperation.
8. Repeat this session to establish these words, then you can use this method whenever you want to introduce to introduce new words.

METHOD:

1. Establish, the meaning of the word with a picture.
2. Isolate the word on a card and match it with the word below the picture.
3. Look at the word without the picture (i.e. in a game). Your child can match it with the word under the picture if he cannot remember it.
4. Reward (praise, feelings of achievement) when correct.
5. Extra reward if correct without matching it.

ACTIVITY 1 DAY 3 PRACTICING RECOGNIZING WORDS –STEPPING STONES GAME

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

- Your first simple reader. Make sure it is well known. This will form the reference point for words that are not remembered.
- Cards with all the words from the first book and maybe some very interesting ones from the second “This is” book.
- Chalk if you will play “Stepping Stones” game outside.
- Stars.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

This will show you if your child has in fact retained the words you have been isolating. If he has not remembered them, he needs to go back to the book and read along to find out what they say while he is playing the game.

Establish your playing school procedure.

1. Read the first book or books,

Repeat some of the day 1 activities.

2. Play new game “Stepping Stones” game.

Place four or five word cards you have chosen on the stones. Start with the easy ones. Change the order around occasionally.

Don’t include “This is” or “and” initially until you are sure that the other words are known. But once the other words are well known you can concentrate on these more difficult words.

Tell him part of your room has turned into a river and to get across he has to be able to say the words on the cards correctly. If he misses one he will fall splash! into the river.

Or you can draw stepping stones on the pavement outside and put a card in each.

Let him have several turns, checking in the book if he can’t remember what the word says, (remove any that are too hard).

Then you have a turn and get him to check very carefully that you are right - it is a good idea to miss one and fall splash in the water but make sure it is one he knows.

3. Re read his book

If he knows each word and can read the book pointing to the words, try covering up the pictures and get him to read it. **HE IS NOW READING!**

Give him lots of appreciative feedback!

3. Don’t forget the star on the record sheet.

ACTIVITY 1 DAY 4 ANOTHER NEW SIMPLE READER

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

- Word cards: all the words introduced in the first simple readers .
- New: Make another simple reader with very few words, use “Sam’s book” if you have not already done so
- New words in “Sam’s book” are only “Sam” and “Jack” .
- Strips with the sentences in the book on them.
- Cards with the new words in the book on them.
- A page with all the words in the book on it.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Establish your playing school procedure.

1. Revise all the first words you have taught

Play “Stepping Stones” or another favorite game.

2. Read the new book as a story,

He will be able to read almost all of it - only needing to be told the new names.
Continue to point to the words.

3. Take turns reading each page.

4. Then ask your child to read the whole book to you.

5. Read the book looking for the new words on the cards.

6. You could try making his own sentences with the word cards.

e.g. **“This is Sam and mummy and daddy and Jemma.”**

Use any other words he may have learned. Write a new word for him if he needs it.

You may not have enough words yet to make it interesting.

6 Do the record sheet

Put a star on the record sheet for good work (or even if the work was disappointing.)

Again encourage him to read this new reader to any one he meets.

ACTIVITY 1 DAY 5 REVISING WORDS NEW GAME “CLAP WHEN YOU SEE”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

- Select some words to revise and have the cards for these words from one or both of your simple readers e.g. new words “Sam” and “Jack”. The readers can again form a reference point for words that are not well remembered.

Or you can make a list of the words you are concentrating on and draw a picture beside each one to use as a reference point. Or use cards with a picture and word under it as reference points.

Jemma had a list of the words she knew on the bathroom door with a sketch to help with some. That is her preferred reference point. New words can be added as learned.

- For the game use the words you have been already teaching unless these are very well known then you can use new ones.

This session can easily be stopped half way through and done on different days.

- Pages with same words written in dots to trace. Texas.
- Stars.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Establish your playing school procedure.

1. Read the one or more of your simple books pointing to each word, including the list of words on the last page.
2. Play new game with known words “Clap when you see --”

Select about half a dozen words that are known. Have a reference book available for checking or better still some pictures with the word under it.

Hold all the cards in a pile and show him one at a time. Say “Clap when you see **“mummy”!**” Then change the top card slowly until you get to **“mummy”**. If he does not recognize it get him to check one of his references and clap. Once he gets the idea and is recognizing most of the words pretend to go very fast and so he will not see the one you have chosen.

3. Play other favorite games.
4. Don't forget the star on the record sheet.

ACTIVITY 1 DAY 6 DOING A BIT OF WRITING

A WORD ABOUT WRITING.

Writing and copying words is a very good way to impress their shape on your memory and is useful with four or five year old children. However with younger children their physical development and fine motor coordination may not sufficiently developed to make this a particularly useful activity.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

- Black/White boards - ideally two little boards (30 mm X 40 mm) plus chalk and dusters. Or use paper and crayons if you do not have access to a blackboard.

You can make one or two blackboards quite easily with a sheet of three ply or maisonite and a tin of blackboard paint. They don't last for ever but are OK for a while. You can get sheets of proper "Timsonplate" black (green) board from Bunnings cut to size.

- Cards with picture and word under it. Same words as you have been already teaching unless these are very well known then you can use new ones.
- Cards with several words from one or both books.
- Pages with some words written in dots to trace.
- Textas.
- Stars.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Re-establish your playing school procedure.

For writing the "teacher" sits on a little chair and the "child" sits on the floor !

1. Play yesterday's new game again

"Clap when you see --" a good quick revision of any words that are becoming well known.

Select about half a dozen words that are known. Still have a reference available for checking when he forgets.

3. Do a bit of writing on the blackboard

You do a writing pattern of a line of shapes and get him to repeat it underneath.

e.g. a line of vertical strokes, a line of circles, or a line of zigzags., a line of m's joined together.

4. Write one of the words large in dots and let him trace over it.

5. See if he can copy that word. Repeat if this is reasonably easy. Do not criticize attempts that may seem very inadequate - the coordination required to do this needs lots of practice and a level of physical development.

6. Don't forget the star on the record sheet.

ACTIVITY 1 DAY 7 NEW READER , NEW GAME MAKING OWN SENTENCES

WHAT YOU NEED:

- Word cards: all the words introduced so far .
- New: Third simple reader **“Sam’s family”**

New words in “Sam’s family” are only **“has”** , **“called”** , **“friend”** and **“Esteban”**.

The only word it important to teach here is **“has”**, but **“called”** is also valuable as it is a good word to use in other books. You can make a book about all of his friends.

If you can easily make your own reader do so and use **“Sam’s “has” book”** as a supplement later.

- Strips with the sentences in the book on them and/or cards with the new words in the book on them.
- Spare cards to write a new word if required.

WHAT YOU DO:

Establish your playing school procedure.

1. Revise all the first words you have taught

Play a favorite game.

2. Introduce the new book as a story,

Tell him that there is a new word in it and it is **“has”**, but he will know most of the other words.

It is not an easy word, so you will need to tell him a few times as he reads the book.

Continue to point to the words.

3. Take turns reading each page.

Then ask your child to read the whole book to you.

4. Read the book looking for the new word **“has”** .

- 5...Try making his own sentences with the word cards.

Lay them out on the floor or table.

e.g. **“This is “own name”**

“Own name” has a mummy and a daddy”

“Own name” has a friend called ----”

Use any other words he may have learned. Write a new word for him if he needs it.

You may not have enough words yet to make it interesting.

Jemma needed new words to make her sentence “Jemma has a special bear called Hanni.” and they will be words that she uses and remembers

5. Do record sheet

Again, encourage him to read this new reader to any one he meets.

ACTIVITY 1 DAY 8 FISHING GAME

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

- Simple readers
- Word cards
- Equipment for fishing game

To make fish you will need

(1) Coloured cards cut out in fish shapes (all the same or different if you are imaginative!)

(2) A paper clip on each fish with a card attached (you can write the words on the fish but you will want to use the fish with other words- or you can dispense with the colored fish shapes and just pretend the cards are “fish”.)

(3) Fishing rod and line -a short stick with a piece of string about 600mm long tied to one end. A small cheap magnet (probably a horse shoe magnet) tied on the end of the string.

The magnet is the hook, and should pick up the fish by the paper clip when it is dangled above it.

You could use a piece of blue wool to define a lake in which the fish are swimming.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

1. Read sentences in most recent reader
2. Choose a number of words to revise (depending on the stage you are at).

Choose some of the more interesting words that have been used in the sentences to practice their recognition in a different context. Write them on cards or just use the cards you have been practicing.

(If your child finds this hard, choose the easy ones - these are usually interesting nouns or words he has met before.. If he finds this very easy choose the tricky ones.)

Go through them once quickly to be sure.

3. Play the fishing game

Spread the fish with a words clipped on to each in the lake or pond outlined by the wool or just use your imagination for the lake.

Let your child try to catch a fish by dangling the magnet above the paper clip on a fish. He must throw the fish back again if he cannot say the word on it.

Lizzie used multiple fishing rods and fish as a game suitable for the three year old guests at Sam's third birthday party.

There are lots of other uses - revision of any words, letters, numbers, sums.

4. Play some of your other favorite games.

ACTIVITY 1 DAY 9 and onward MORE NEW READERS

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

- Word cards: all the words introduced so far .
- New: Further simple readers such as “**Sam’s has book**”, “**Sam’s toys**”

These are books about things that are of utmost importance to your child.

Use the model book to make your own even if they are only in your own printing with a sketch drawn by you or your child.

- Make cards with the new words in the book on them as you go.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

1. Keep revising all the words you have taught by playing favorite games.
2. Introduce the new book as a story or use a new book in which all words are known.

Continue to point to the words.

3. Take turns reading each page
4. Read the book looking for the new words.
4. Try making his own sentences with the word cards.

Lay them out on the floor or table.

Write a new word for him if he needs it for his sentence.

5. Isolate and practice interesting and useful words using favorite games

INTRODUCTION TO ACTIVITY 2 FIRST STAGE OF PHONICS –RECOGNIZING INITIAL SOUNDS

This series of activities is the introduction to phonics- the method of reading that enables a child to work out words by himself using the individual letters of the word to identify the word.

The basis of this skill is recognizing the sounds that a word is composed of, and also recognizing the sounds that individual letters most frequently make.

An alphabet book is a useful aid in developing these skills.

A NOTE ON ALPHABET BOOKS

An alphabet book is designed so that the first sound in the name of the object in the picture gives a clue to the sound that the letter makes.

The letters are best learned as the sounds made by the letters, rather than the names of the letters. This means that a child firstly learns to call the letter “c” by the sound “ck” rather than “see”. **These sounds than can soon be put together to make words, and the child can hear “m-o-p” makes “mop”** (after some practice) where he would not be able to make head or tail of “em- oh-pee”. You can teach the names of the letters later, but it can be confusing at the earliest stage.

The sounds that we teach first are those that a letter most commonly makes in a word. For example we teach a child that “c” says “ck” at first, even though we later may teach him that it also can say “ss” as in “mice”.

All consonants have an easily recognizable normal sound, but vowel “a” may be used equally often in their short or long form “a” as in “cat”, or “a” as in “cake” or “sail”.

The short form is generally taught first because it is generally less complicated than the long form, which is often combined with another vowel before it makes the sound. .e.g “ai” as in “sail”.

You will find that even quite good alphabet books do not stick to this method, and have pictures of “ivy” for the letter “i”, rather than “ink”.

It is always much easier for a child to hear a sound of a consonant when it is joined directly to a vowel rather than another consonant. For instance the sound “s” is much easier to hear in “sun” than “snake” which is confusing as the initial sound is “sn” rather than “sss”.

Try to keep these points in mind when you are working with your child in these sessions.

It is quite difficult, so try out the test for parents on the next page and if you get anything wrong, read this page again.

TEST FOR PARENTS

Which of the following would be good words for teaching their initial sounds?

Put a tick beside the good ones and a cross beside those that would not be as suitable, then turn the page upside down for the answers.

1. b butterfly
2. c church
3. r rabbit
4. s star
5. o owl
6. o octopus
7. a animal
8. u Union Jack
9. v verandah
10. c crocodile
11. t thong
12. a apricot

ANSWERS

1. butterfly good word
2. church not good, starts with "ch" not "c"
3. rabbit good word
4. star not good starts with "st" not just "s"
5. owl not good, starts with "ow" not short "o"
6. octopus good word
7. animal good word
8. Union Jack not good, long "u" rather than "u" as in umbrella
9. veranda good word
10. crocodile not good "cr" not "c"
11. thong not good, initial sound is "th" not "t"
12. apricot not good long "a" used

ACTIVITY 2 INTRODUCING ALPHABET BOOK

ACTIVITY 2 DAY 2 INITIAL SOUNDS OF LITTLE THINGS

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- MATCHBOX OF LITTLE THINGS

Start collecting these from around the house for a few days before this session. They should be small enough to fit into a matchbox (that is quite small), fit the rules about suitable initial sounds, and interesting to your child.

Some suggestions: match, candle, safety pin, nail, leaf, money (or five cents) band aid, photo (cut small - initial sound "f"), seed, nut, paper clip, ring (a cheap pretty one is fun) button, key, lid, hair clip, toothpick, rubber ring, lolly. You don't need this many.

WHAT YOU CAN DO (this contains several days of activity)

1. Show matchbox of "little things" and name them.

Go through and name everything together. It doesn't matter what you call something so long as you have agreed on a name for it e.g. bean or seed, money or five cents.

2. Listen for initial sounds

Put every thing on the floor or table and ask your child to pick any one up and tell you what sound it's name starts with. e.g. "candle starts with c".

Then take turns to do it.

(Use only a few to start with if he finds this hard, and go over and over the same ones, and choose easy ones "s", "m", "f", "r" which can make a continuous sound.).

3. Play "I spy with my little eye something that starts with "s" etc.

Using little things.

This is harder than just saying what sound you can hear in a word. If it is very hard, have only four or five little things on the floor till he gets the idea of listening to the word carefully.

4. Play "I spy with my little eye something that starts with."

Use pictures in a picture book so you focus on just a few things. Go through all the objects on a page saying "bus starts with "b" " etc Then play "I spy" with the objects on the same page.

Continue with this work until it the concept grasped and your child can hear the sound before you go on to initial letters.

In Prep grades at my school, the teachers would mostly introduce one sound a day and draw pictures of things with the sound, or find pictures in magazines and stick them on the page. If your child finds this difficult try this.

4. Stars and record sheet.

ACTIVITY 2 DAY 3 MAKING AN 'INITIAL SOUNDS' BOOK

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- Box of "little things"
- Blank plain paper book. (staple one together.)
- Magazines for pictures to cut out

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

This is something that you can do over several days or longer. You are emphasizing the sounds, not the letters at this stage. Many pre schools do a sound a week, but once your child gets the idea you do not need to do a page for every sound before you start to teach letters.

1. Play "I spy" with little things
2. Introduce the new blank book. Write a letter large on the first page. I suggest "s" or "m" or "f" the easiest sounds to hear. (You are concentrating on the sound, but this is an introduction to the letter too.)

Tell your child what it says then practice saying it.

Look for pictures of things starting with that sound to stick on the page. Check by saying the word slowly and listening - does it really start with "s"?

Get your child to find appropriate pictures, but veto any that are not correct.

(if you don't have magazines, you can ask him to think of a word of something that starts with "s" (like I spy) and then look for images of it on the internet, and print a good picture out, or draw it.

3. Draw some other things that starts with your sound

On his blackboard, or a piece of paper rather than in his book, which can become a reference book, unless your child is really good at fitting his pictures into a small space.

4. Start a new page with a new sound/letter if your child is very confident

Continue this on subsequent days until you have several pages. Add to each page when you find something new that fits. You may continue until you have completed the alphabet

INTRODUCTION TO ACTIVITY 3 LETTERS FOR SOUNDS

This activity is actually learning to recognize the letters of the alphabet and identifying them by the sound that they make.

Because it is the lower case letters that generally are used in written words, it is confusing to introduce capital letters until considerably later. (In fact I cannot remember ever actually introducing capital letters to children, they were picked up incidentally from capital letters at the beginning of names and sentences.)

And it is much more helpful and less confusing to introduce the sound rather than the name of the letter initially—“**ck**” for “**c**” rather than the name pronounced “**see**”.

How fast can you go

You will need to spend more time on hearing initial sounds if your child has difficulty with this . (Don't panic – if you have only been doing it for a week - at school they may take a week for each sound before they start letter recognition.)

Recognition of letters

But if you need to hurry - for instance if you are trying to help your child to catch up with his peers, continue to work with the letters as well as the sounds. But if you are working with a preschooler, take it easy with the letters until the sounds can be easily recognized.

As with words, the processes involved in recognizing letters includes two separate processes - firstly the recognition of the shape of the letter e.g. “**f**” and secondly remembering the sound made by that letter. Your child may see “**f**” and say “That is the fish one”. He recognizes the letter but cannot remember it's sound.

It is also essential that before you ask a child to put letters together to make phonetic or sounding words he knows each letter very very well indeed.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- Alphabet book

You will need a good alphabet book. Choose one and stick to it as it becomes confusing if you are using more than one as a reference book. (see note on alphabet books.)

- Lettercards.

You will need a set of 26 letter cards - they can be quite small with all the lowercase letters printed in your best writing or print them out on the computer.

I suggest for “q” you write “qu”- thus obviating confusion with “p” and “q”, and also because it is always written thus.

Warning - “b” and “d”

Do not push your child to learn these letters too fast, and be particularly careful of “b “ and “d, “n” and “u”. If your child becomes confused and panicky about recognizing such difficult to differentiate letters this can set up a mental blockage that makes it even harder to learn.

I have a mental block of my own associated with the word “receive”. Because I have become so confused about the various rules about “i” and “e” and the exceptions to the rule, I can never spell “receive” without checking it in a dictionary (Thank God for spell checks!) I know that “i” is before “e” except after “c”, but there are some exceptions to this rule. I can never remember if “receive” is an exception or not. I am always so sure I will get it wrong that I cannot approach the word calmly and logically. If you are not careful you can set up a similar state of mind in your child about “b “and “d” .

If he has trouble with “b” and “d” just get him to calmly check in his book each time, and he will gradually learn them as he meets them in context. (You can use “bed” as a reference point”.

- bright attractive LOWER CASE plastic letters.

This is just a new attractive interesting toy to make continued practice a little bit more exciting.

There is a good set of fridge magnets readily available. The ones I used to use are no longer produced. NOTE: There are plenty of uppercase letters (THEY ARE WORSE THAN USELESS AT THIS STAGE- THEY ARE CONFUSING), but I found lower case letters very hard to find.

You can substitute with just another set of cards (on a different colour card, written in coloured pens), or if you are really energetic, cutting out each lowercase letter in outline from a shiny piece of coloured cardboard.

Writing

This week we again try some writing.

Writing, controlling a writing instrument so that it will make the marks you want it to, is a very difficult skill for most small children. To be able to write words neatly you need to be taught the letter formations one at a time, so remember that this is just a play around, exploratory session.

We are not concentrating on teaching how to write in this program, but one of the things that help develop control of writing instruments is doing writing patterns - rows of circles, rows of straight lines approximately the same size, rows of linked mmm and nnn or uuu’s. Jemma improved her writing of mm’s greatly after practice of rows of joined mms.

Writing is difficult for a four or five year old, particularly as they are just starting. One of the greatest causes of frustration to a five year old (and cause of temper

tantrums) can be his inability to do things his older brother or his mother or father can do. You must be very positive about all his efforts at writing. Be very generous in your praise of him for trying hard and for improving. Be careful if you are disappointed in his efforts that you do not show it. You will be surprised, maybe amazed, at how quickly his writing will improve with practice and praise.

ACTIVITY 3 DAY 3 INTRODUCE PLASTIC LETTERS

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- Lower case plastic letters, fridge magnet letters, or just your letter cards if the others are too hard to find. (They are only for a bit of extra fun and motivation- but they are excellent motivation and fun to use)
- Alphabet book

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Introduce the packet of letters (or whatever new letters you have made)

Let him tip the letters out and go through telling you the ones he knows.

Explain why any letters are different from the ones you have been using.

2. Compare plastic letters with alphabet book letters

Spread all the letters on the floor, turn up the right way.

Open the alphabet book at the first page. Ask "What sound does this letter make?"

Then ask "Can you find "a" on the floor?" and get him to compare it with the book to check he is right.

(If he doesn't remember the sound, get him to try to work it out by finding what apple starts with. If he still has trouble tell him the sound.)

Continue through the book finding all the letters.

If you have multiples of any of the letters, go through them finding the page to match each letter and saying it's sound.

3. Sort plastic letters into known and unknown

Get him to go through all the letters putting them into two piles, those he can say, and those he cannot, or says incorrectly.

Put the letter into his pile if he knows it, and your pile if he doesn't.

Then get him to go through all those he doesn't know (or some of them) and look them up in his alphabet book. If you have time after this you could again check how many he now can put into his own pile.

NB If you let him play with the letters and the alphabet book by himself, he could continue to teach himself with the letters if his interest has been aroused (to get all the letters into his own pile)

4. Make words with the letters

You make a word he knows well, e.g. his own name. Get him to read it, then break it up and try to make it again. You can use other really well known words from his reading. Use a word card to copy when re-making the word.

5. Revise "I Spy" game

6. Record Sheet and star

These are activities that can be enjoyed together or by a child individually if he is interested until all the letters are known.

ACTIVITY 3 DAY 6 NEW GAME “TICK TACK TOE”

EQUIPMENT

- Letter cards or plastic letters
- Alphabet book
- Pointer

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Go through letter cards or plastic letters

Choose tricky ones to use in the game. Trace over them with finger.

2. Game “Tick Tack Toe”

Scatter several letter cards (or plastic letters) face down on the floor.

Use a stick or a ruler or piece of rolled up newspaper as a pointer.

Take it in turns to walk around touching each card in turn as you say

“Tick Tack toe,

Here I go

Where I land I do not know”

Pickup the card you are touching when you stop and say the letter.

Show him how to play it, then let him do it until all the cards or letters are chosen correctly. He can check in his alphabet book if he is unsure. He keeps the correct ones. If he says a card incorrectly put it down face down again.

(This is a great game to revise just about anything.)

Don't forget to read your readers as well as doing this work.

INTRODUCTION TO ACTIVITY 4 BLENDING LETTER SOUNDS TO MAKE WORDS

Blending

In day 1 of this week it is suggested that you commence the introduction of phonetic words and blending letters to identify words. Some simple words are suggested such as “**sun**”, **man**” “**fat**”. This is the first stage of blending for children who know all their sounds.

To read “**sun**” from “**s**” “**u**” “**n**” your child has to

1. Identify each individual letter by its sound.
2. Hear the three sounds blend into a word.

That is keep saying each sound slowly until he starts to say the next sound .

“**sss**” ..”**uuu**” ...”**nnn**”.

3. Identify the sounds he has joined together as a word he knows.

Your child can really blend when he can sound out a word he has never heard before such as a name (**Zip, Pud**) and say it.

I think that this is the most difficult part of the whole program, if your child does not know all the letters very well defer it and do some of the next activities first, coming back to it every now and then.

If he is ready, start now, but don't let it get too frustrating or spend long too long on it.

DON'T EXPECT IMMEDIATE SUCCESS even if your child is very bright.

Most of you will find that you can say “**c**”, “**a**”, “**t**” ten times for your child and ask him what is the word, and he will brightly say “**dog**” or “**pig**” and you will feel like strangling him! But he doesn't understand what you are on about., and he cannot hear what you are saying. When you ask him to sound it for himself he will say “I'm sick of this game!”

If you only use words that he recognizes he will know the answer immediately, but he won't get the idea - so if you are working with an older child who has missed out on this skill you may have to use some obscure words to be sure he gets the method - because The **method** is what you are trying to teach. This is so he will be able to work out other words for himself and gradually become independent of you telling him words. It is often helpful to give him a clue - such as two or three pictures to choose from.

But be careful - if you work with three pictures - sun, man and rat - your child will quickly work out that if the word starts with “**m**” it must be “**man**”, and will not listen to the other sounds.

All I can say is- don't get too discouraged. Take it steady and don't let it disturb your relationship with your child and his enjoyment of the program in general. I know that time and time again I have sat and listened to the twelve mothers in the group explaining how difficult this work was with their child. But before the end of the program, I think every child grasped it.

The word game in this week's work is just one of the simple little games that help to make revising words or letters interesting.

When I was first teaching we were supposed firstly to teach blends of just two letters - "ca" "co" "cu" called stems!. Then the child was supposed to easily add the third sound. But it was all so meaningless I think it is better to try the three letter straight away.- except for "if" and' etc as encountered in reading .

Word and picture cards

You can find cards that consist of three letter phonetic words with an illustration to correspond with each word.

THE AIM IS NOT TO TEACH THE CHILD TO RECOGNIZE THE WORD, BUT TO PRACTICE WORKING OUT WORDS FOR HIMSELF. Therefore they should be cut up into individual word and picture card sets immediately.

The fact that you have a picture can help a child to guess a little to begin with, using only 2 or 3 cards, can help him get the idea. Remember also that nothing motivates as much as success. So try to engineer some success.

Later he can search through the whole set to make up his pairs or even play "memory" with a friend using them.

MEMORY or FISH is a very old card game played by two or more in which the players have a set of cards (say 5) and all the other cards are face down on the table/ floor.

You take it in turns to turn over a card and try to find one to match one of those in your hand. You continue your turn while you are successful, but your opponent takes the turn when you miss .

Reading a simple phonic reader

This is a stepping-stone to attacking any reading matter, by reading a book where every word can be sounded out. Success is ensured if all the words are phonetically regular. It gives lots of practice with the new skill in a fun format. Try making your own reader - it is a bit too hard for your child to suggest the right words. Then you can move to readers where some of the words are irregular, but most are phonetic. (some of the Dr.Seuss books).

Look for commercially available phonic readers - for some inexplicable reason there are not very many to be easily found.. Some are advertised on the internet.

Writing three letter words

If you ask a child to copy the order of the letters in a known word - such as “**hop**” or “**mat**” this is just a recognition exercise. He just looks for letters similar to those in his copy. But if you ask him to make “**mat**” out of his letters without a copy to refer to, that is a MUCH harder skill - and it should not be expected of your child at this stage.

The first stage is learning to read “**mat**”. It is more difficult to hear the word “**mat**” in your head and try to work out what letters it is made from than to look at the three letters and try and find out what sounds they make, and from that identify the word.

ACTIVITY 4 DAY 1 MATCHING THREE LETTER WORDS WITH PICTURES

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- New three letter word cards and matching pictures.
write and draw your own.
- Alphabet book
- Letter cards
- Plastic letters

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Revise single letters

- a) Revise the alphabet book.
- b) Sort the plastic letters or letter cards into known and unknown.

If your child has trouble with more than three or four of these spend most time on this section.

Play “**Fishing game**” with difficult letters with alphabet book available for reference.

Don't worry too much about “b” and “d” - leave them out completely -if they cause trouble don't introduce three letter words using them yet - and every time you do have trouble, get your child to check in the alphabet book.

2. New game Matching three letter words with picture card

Start with a set of about four words and the pictures to go with them.

Go through all the picture cards first, finding the correct name for each picture e.g.

“**mat**” not “**carpet**” - If disputed - “**That is the word we will be using for this game**”.

1. Spread out picture cards on the floor.
2. Show him one word card at a time.

3. Ask him to tell you all the sounds one at a time in order once or twice, saying them very slowly. Tell him the sound if he cannot remember.

4. Ask him to try and work out what the word says saying the sound over and over, and see if he can find the right picture.

Suggest he look at the pictures - they might give him a clue.

If he chooses the wrong picture, ask him to say the sounds again to check if he is right.

5. You may need to try and help him blend the sounds together, don't let him get too frustrated, but also be sure that he has a good try himself.

Even if he can blend only the first two letters he may gradually get the idea.

6. When he gets a pair correct, much praise - and he puts it in his pile until he has matched all of them.

If it was successful play again with a larger number of pictures and words . If it was very hard give it away for the day and start afresh again soon.

3 Repeat game - mixing up both words and pictures.

If he found the game quite difficult, repeat it in the same form or make it simpler.

But if it was fairly easy, he might like to mix up both words and pictures on the floor, then try to sort them into pairs by himself. Add extra words (make your own) as it gets too easy.

4. Go through the pile of words on their own without the help of the pictures

This is when he is really good at working out all the words. Make some more three letter word cards and picture cards and extend the game.

Continue to repeat variations of day 1 and day 2 and play "**Tick tack toe**", "**fishing**" **Stepping stones**" with the three letter word cards. He will get to recognize them soon as well as being able to sound them out, so keep adding one or two new ones that have to be sounded.

ACTIVITY 4 DAY 2 READ AND ILLUSTRATE THREE LETTER WORDS

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- Letter cards or plastic letters
- Three letter word cards and matching pictures
- Blackboard and chalk
- Paper and coloring pens

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Revise sounds of single letters

Use letter cards or plastic letters.

If any are still causing trouble hide them under cups and play “**Tick tack toe**”.

2. **Play matching words and pictures**

As for yesterday, but include a couple of new ones if he is coping.

3. **Copy words on blackboards and illustrate**

Write a three letter word on a blackboard and he draws a picture of it

Use the same words that are on the cards at first , then make up new ones.

Try to think of funny ones or even unusual words “**zip**” “**pip**” “**pup**” when he gets good at this.

4. **Copy and illustrate words on paper**

Write several words on paper for him to work out and illustrate if he is getting good at this..But check what he is drawing. (You may not be able to identify it, but it may be correct!)

5. **Copy words from cards with plastic letters and find the picture to match.**

6. Much **praise and stars** if this has gone well. It can be done over a number of days. It is hard work!

ACTIVITY 4 DAY 3 “SKITTLES GAME”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

Ball (light plastic for indoor use) and skittles

Skittles made from plastic cream bottles with a slit cut in the top of the bottle to slide a card in, (or a cheap set of plastic skittles and blue tack to attach the cards.)

Three letter word cards and matching pictures..

Any reading cards for revision

Fishing game equipment

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Revise letters

Choose some that need revising and play games with them.

Particularly “b” and “d” with alphabet book for reference.

2. New game “Skittles”

Choose some three letter words to revise.

Put the skittles in a row or double row.

Your child rolls the ball at them from a distance than ensures that he hits at least one or two. (May need to be quite close!)

He sounds out the word as he puts the skittle upright again. If he can say the word correctly he may replace it with another card.

3. Play some other favorite games

“Tick tack toe” , “Stepping stones” , “Clap when you see” , “Hide the card”, “Fishing” with three letter words.

3. Illustrate some of the words

ACTIVITY 4 DAY 4 NEW “TINY BELL GAME”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- Tiny bell (hard to find - except for a “cat bell” in a pet shop. Just a gimmick for a new game)
- Or you could use tapping sticks, a drum, a tape or the radio.
- Any word cards you would like to revise.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Select words to revise.

Sounding words (or anything you wish to revise.)

2. New game “ Stop with the Bell”

Put all the cards in a circle on the floor, face downwards.

While you ring the tiny bell he must march, skip or run around the circle.

As soon as the bell stops he must immediately pick up the nearest card and say the word.

If he knows it, he may put it into his pile, box or corner. If he is incorrect, tell him the word, and replace it in the circle.

The ringing of the bell can be varied by the tapping sticks, drum, turning the radio off and on as the signal to stop and find the card (like musical chairs.)

Make sure to change places and let him have a turn with the bell.

3. Record card and stars

ACTIVITY 4 DAY 5 MAKE OWN SENTENCES WITH WORD CARDS

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- All word cards
- Paper and coloured pens

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Read one or two of his books

2. Go through his three letter words.

By this stage he should know how to sound out words he has not met before, but also start to recognize some of those he has met often, an essential stage.

3. Make sentences with some of the words he knows

Spread the words on the floor

Take it in turns to make a sentence from the words on the floor. Read it. Break it up and make another - or leave it if you have enough words.

These should be very simple to start with but can get longer and more tricky or silly.. (You can't worry about capital letters at the beginning of the sentence or question marks.)

They could include a question or a false statement. **“can a dog hop “ “A red pig can sit on a pot”**

4. Teach “yes’ and “no” and make or write some questions

Write out some “yes” and “no” cards. You could introduce a question mark too.

Using only known words including three letter words make up some questions.

Write these on your blackboard, paper or make them with your word cards..

“Is a pin big?” “Is a cat fat?” “Can a dog run?” “Is the sun wet?”

Your child can answer them with the card, or by giving them an appropriate big tick or cross, or copying the correct word “yes” or “no’

5. Copy and illustrate some silly sentences (with words he knows or can sound out,)

e.g **“The pup sat on a pip.” “The hen has a hat on it’s leg.”**

He will love making these up, use the cards you have spread out on the floor and make new ones as needed.. He can use a few new words to make it more interesting.

6. Record sheet and stars

ACTIVITY 4 DAY 6 READING FIRST PHONIC READER

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- Three letter word cards - including words from new reader .
- New phonic reader e.g. "Pud and Nip"
- You can cut it out and staple it to make a proper book or read it in situ.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Practice the three letter words in the reader

Use words from last page of reader. (Practice names with capital letters - explain about a capital letter for a name.)

Play a game with the words to check if they can be if he can sound them out - e.g. "Stepping Stones", plus another game or two if they are found to be fairly hard. Don't go on to the book today if they are too difficult, practice them some more so reading the book will be successful.

2. Practice reading a sentence or two made up from his cards.

Not the sentences in the book- some he made up yesterday.

3. Introduce new reader "Pud and Nip" (cut out and staple.)

(Introduce "Ann and the dog and the cat" similarly soon if this is successful.)

Let him read a page and then look at the picture carefully. Then re-read the sentence again. Go on to the next page.

3. Lots of celebrations and stars

He has just completed another important milestone!

Make some more readers on your computer using your own known words plus three letter words (or write them or use your cards) .e.g. "Mummy can sit on a pin"

ACTIVITY 4 DAY 7 MAKE SILLY PHONIC READER

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- Three letter word cards - including words from new reader
- Old phonic readers e.g. "Pud and Nip" " Ann and the dog and the cat"
- Silly sentences ready to be pasted into a book.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Read your known readers

Use words from last page of reader. (Practice names with capital letters - explain about a capital letter for a name.)

- 2 Introduce "Silly Sentences" if you have not done this before.

e.g. **"Sam sat on a ham"**

"Pig can hop and jig."

Let him read the first sentence and paste it in his book to illustrate. If he is good at it, read all the sentences before he starts to illustrate, if he finds it hard, let him have a rest drawing before he tries the next one.

3. Illustrate sentences to make own book

3. Read the whole reader again

Then read it to daddy and the cat.

Get a copy of the some commercial sequential phonic readers readers and gradually read the whole of the first series.

Then you will both be ready to be promoted to the next grade!

INTRODUCTION TO ACTIVITY 5 MULTISENSORY METHODS

Multisensory Method of teaching reading

The activity is based on the principles of the Multi-sensory methods of teaching reading, and I think there are some valuable aspects of this method that can be used particularly for some children.

It is based on the premise that we learn through all our senses and therefore as many of them as possible should be involved in the process of learning to read. The sense that is used in this method which is not used so greatly in other methods, is the sense of touch.

Using the sense of touch

Children are encouraged to use this sense by writing, tracing over and feeling the shapes of words and letters. This helps to impress them on their memory.

I believe we often underestimate our sense of touch. Did you know that you can read a word written on your back with a finger? Try it!

For children with very poor visual memories, remedial teachers use letters made of sand paper for the children to trace over until they become firmly imprinted on their memory.

Using modeling clay or playdoh/ confetti sized pieces of paper

This week the use of plasticine/ playdough/ modeling clay/ or home made play dough to fashion letters and words using this method. We used to use confetti as a fun thing to glue over words, but confetti is also no longer widely available. But you can make something similar by chopping up magazine pictures into tiny pieces - or even get your child to tear up tiny pieces to glue on a letter or word.

Tearing up and gluing pieces of paper, for instance to make a picture, is very time consuming - I can remember giving all my class an Easter egg outline to fill with lovely coloured scraps - when I needed them to be occupied quietly for some considerable time at the end of term while I did paper work!

If your child has real difficulty in memorizing shapes - this is an area of teaching you can expand. Just tracing over a word with a finger is a helpful activity. In the teaching of spelling frequent tracing of words is recommended. The very necessity to become involved in the learning process by actually doing something is also another basic educational principle.

Make your own play dough

A CUP OF PLAIN FLOUR

A CUP OF TABLE SALT (this makes it keep for ages).

A FEW DROPS OF FOOD COLORING (cochineal or whatever- not paint- it stains)

ADD WATER TO MAKE A STIFF DOUGH

KNEAD UNTIL IT IS SMOOTH

It will keep in the fridge for several weeks if it is rolled up into a good ball again every time you use it.

Try it with half a cup of each to start with and see how easy it is. Use a different colour for the next batch.

My apologies for the mess this equipment creates - but they are things most children enjoy.

If your child is finding some of the previous activities difficult, try these activities earlier in the program. For many children they can be used interspersed with previous activities for fun and variety.

ACTIVITY 5 DAY 1 INTRODUCE PLASTICINE/ PLAYDOH

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

New packet of plasticine, modeling clay, commercially sold playdoh, or the playdoh you have made.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Find words or letters your child needs to practice

Go through your pile of words and find some that are not well known. Put them aside. Get him to trace over them with his finger as he says them.

2. Introduce your new modeling clay or playdoh

Let your child have a bit of time playing with his new material.

Then write one of the difficult words on a piece of paper perhaps with a quick picture to be sure he remembers what the word means. Size about 4 or 5 centimeters - not too small, but not too big or you'll run out of material.

Then let him roll out his stuff and bend it around to make the letters to put over your writing.

Keep reminding him what the word is.

Repeat with other words if time and interest permits.

I can remember seeing a student teacher doing this with a class of children for a crit lesson, for me to write an assessment of her reading lesson. She did a lovely job of introducing the material then gave out paper for all the children to cover with play doh with a lovely big word written on each. The children worked very well, and she finished the lesson happily. BUT AT NO TIME HAD SHE DISCUSSED OR TOLD THEM WHAT WAS WRITTEN ON THE PAPER. It was a great craft lesson but no teaching of reading was achieved.

3 Go through word cards.

Go through the word cards again particularly the ones you have spent time on.

4. Record sheet and star if needed

ACTIVITY 5 DAY 2 INTRODUCE CARBON PAPER, CONFETTI

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- Carbon paper or substitute like a cheap etcha sketch board
- Three letter words cards and pictures
- Paper with three letter words written clearly ready to trace, pencil, bulldog clips to clip carbon to paper.
- Confetti or substitute
- Clag or glue stick

(This is just a bit of fun providing an interesting and different way to practice three letter words)

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Go through three letter word cards and pictures

Sort these into pairs.

Choose ones you would like to revise. Trace over them with finger.

2. Trace three letter words using carbon paper

a). Show your child how carbon paper works - which side must be facing down etc.

Show him how it makes an identical copy of the pictures he has drawn on a second piece of paper. Show him how the second piece is spoiled if the paper is moved.

He must use a pencil as a coloring pen is not firm enough to make a good copy.

b). Help him to clip a piece of clean paper under a sheet of carbon under a sheet on which you have written several of his three letter words, leaving room for a picture.

Ask him to trace over your words with his pencil and then draw a picture for each word.

Then unclip the paper and look at your results. (You may need several paper clips.)

He may then colour in his pictures with his pens.

c). He may like to copy several words again, making the first copy himself, with the carbon underneath, - or repeat the first activity.

3. Pasting over words with confetti or little pieces of cut or torn out paper

You may introduce a new glue stick or bottle of clag and the little pieces of paper.

ACTIVITIES 5 DAY 3 (onward) WORK THAT CAN BE DONE WITH LITTLE SUPERVISION

1. Copy interesting words on to blackboard or paper and illustrate
2. Make/illustrate interesting words/sentences with modeling material.
3. Make words with plastic letters.
4. Sound out and match three letter words with their pictures
5. Make as many objects as possible starting with "s" with playdoh.
6. Play favourite word or letter games alone.
7. Paste over words or letters with confetti or substitute or use carbon paper.
8. Make up own sentences with word cards.

INTRODUCTION TO ACTIVITY 6 ILLUSTRATING AND EXPERIENCE READING

Reading about his own experiences

Although the basic methods of teaching beginning reading remain the same, there are a variety of ways that reading material can be presented to a child.

The best way to get a child interested in reading, is ensuring the reading material reflects his own individual interests and experiences. In fact the most suitable reader for a child would be one written specifically about himself, his family, friends, pets and activities.

In some good schools large amount of the reading material provided for a child in learning to read is in fact written about the children in the grade and their own special interests and activities.

The child provides his own subject matter and talks about it in his own words which is then transformed into reading material.

Making your own individual reader

In a school class situation the teacher can plan experiences for the grade together and then plan reading to follow these experiences.

Following a visit to see Sally's pony, the grade learns the words "pony" "carrot" and "ride" and the teacher plans and makes up sentences about the visit. The teacher can the make duplicate copies of a reader specifically for her grade using this vocabulary and describing the children's experiences. This is a lot of work for the teacher but increases the motivation and really ensures rapid learning.

A one-to-one situation - with one teacher and one pupil, is an ideal learning situation for learning to read using experience reading. And these days it is not at all hard to make a book that looks like a real book using your friendly computer.

Making and illustrating experience books

As well as making a reader with controlled vocabulary about your child's individual experiences, it is valuable to let your child make his own book and illustrate it. This can then be read many times and more words gradually learned from it.

Your child can suggest the text - tell you what to write clearly on each page, then illustrate it himself. Your child will remember what he has asked you to write - so don't change it to better grammar for instance. You can build up several books like this - one about any special family activity for instance.

Sentences

One benefit of this work is an increased understanding of words and how words make up a sentence. What is a sentence? That is a really tricky question - involving an understanding of nouns and verbs, subjects and predicates. But basically it is the expression of at least one single thought - it always starts with a

capital letter and ends with a full stop. This simple concept of a sentence can be taught at this stage.

Development of language ability

A further benefit of this work is the development of your child's language ability in preparation for writing his own sentences later.

This week your child is encouraged to tell you his own sentence for you to write down and for him to then illustrate. (He may not even wish to illustrate it - the writing and reading are the important part - the picture is to help him remember his own sentence.)

It may be a good idea, if he is somewhat inarticulate, to let him draw first - and then to tell you what to write. But in my experience this leads to "This is a house and a car and a boat and an aeroplane" type of sentence.

It is much better for your child to have really good think before he tells you what to write. Try not to interfere if he takes some time to think.

In a classroom it is always possible to tell if the sentences are directly from the children themselves or are teacher - directed because the children's sentences are always so much better!

Children seem to get right to the heart of the matter, and things that are important to them may not be important to you.

When we did the first day's work of this week two of Lindy's comments on her family were typical. "I have a little sister and she is bossy". and "I have a mummy who sometimes lets me have lunch orders". which was a very important occasional treat for this five year old. The most important member of the family came first in our book of course - our pet lamb.

When your child has dictated his sentence and you have written it as neatly as possible (or typed it on the computer), and he has drawn his picture, he will then be able to read his own book. Don't criticize his pictures by the way - it is his idea and just because you cannot see people's "tummy buttons" when they have their clothes on, it doesn't mean that they are not there and shouldn't be drawn in! He will have some reason for what he has done even if it is that he didn't leave enough room on the page to make daddy as big as the cat, or he got tired of drawing and couldn't be bothered giving anyone arms.

If you have written each sentence as he gave it to you, he will remember it easily and be able to read it and the whole book to you and the rest of the family.

The book then can be used as a source of words to isolate and learn, and constant reading of the book will assist this learning.

If you are traveling overseas for instance, or have a family member away from home, your child can keep a diary of dictated pages from a very young age - or dictate letters to the absent member, and this can be a valuable educational experience.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

The equipment suggested includes a new set of colored felt tipped pens. They are great if you do not already have them. The provision of some new drawing material will help to motivate this new activity - that is if there is any type of drawing material that your child does not already have available!

ACTIVITY 6 DAY 1 ILLUSTRATING AND DICTATING SENTENCE

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- New coloring pens/ crayons/ pastels or whatever.
- Drawing paper with a fold about 10 cm from the top or bottom. (I tend to use the bottom)
- Black felt tipped pen - to make quite a thick line.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Child draws picture

Ask your child to draw a picture of something interesting, but leaving the strip above or below the fold for you to write in, writing about what he draws. (You could type it at his dictation on your computer and print it out and stick it on his paper.)

2. Parent writes sentence

Ask him to tell you something interesting to write about his picture.

You may have to question him before he gives you an interesting sentence.

At first he may say "That is a house and that is a dog" - but try to encourage him to tell you what is happening in his picture. by asking "Tell me about it in a different way"- "Whose house is it?" "What is the dog doing?"

Try to write it in very careful print with your black texta, for a clear easily read sentence. This is so he can read it himself again and maybe find some of the words he knows or would like to learn.

Jemma's sentence: "Kip is growing in my mummy's tummy and that is the umbilical cord." (After discussions with her doctor mother about the baby brother who was on the way!)

3. Child reads sentence back again

Get him to read it once or twice. Then get him to point out some of the words. "Find "Kip", "mummy" which are known. "Which one do you think would say "umbilical?" "See if you can find it"

4. Repeat if time

He could do several pictures and sentences if interested and there is enough time.

ACTIVITY 6 DAY 2 BOOK ABOUT THE FAMILY

• WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- Coloring pens/ crayons/ pastels or whatever.
- Black felt tipped pen
- Stapled booklet of drawing paper with folds along the bottom

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Writing sentences about the family (This will probably be more than one day's work.)

Write the sentences first, today: at your child's dictation.

Then ask him to draw a picture of what he has written.

Suggest - "We are going to make a book about our family. Who will we write about on the first page. What will we say about him?" and if necessary "Tell me something that he does?" Then write it.

Sam on his baby brother: "Jack has just turned one year old, he can walk and he can even run. He sometimes does what we ask him to".

About himself "I'm a preschooler now!"

Encourage sentences that are as long and interesting as possible.

2. Illustrate and read sentence back again

Ask him to illustrate the first sentence.

Re-read the first sentence before you go on to the next page.

Do a sentence about each member of the family including himself and any pets.

2 Read the whole book through as a story

Read it to other members of the family. Encourage him to read it many times himself.

ACTIVITY 6 DAY 3 PAINTING

Introduction to Painting and other mediums

For his activity you use painting is the major motivating activity, together with similar types of learning methods to those used previously.

This is really just another vehicle for experience writing.

Painting is a great joy to most children, and they rarely have as many opportunities as they would like to do their own painting. In my class room we always had two painting spots for our "Free activities" and art periods and it was always the most popular activity. But it is a lot of work to get ready!

Suggestions are given for making an easel. Powder paints are quite easily available, but are pretty expensive. You may need only red, yellow, blue and perhaps black. You can mix any colour from these or your child will learn how to do it himself.

Children's art work- confidence

Remember to keep any critical comments to yourself as regards your child's pictures.

You may need to build up his confidence to encourage him to really enjoy this. If you don't really enjoy drawing or painting, it is probably because you think what you do is not much good. However as far as even adult art is concerned these days it doesn't have to be realistic to be good. Try to give your child the confidence to be bold and try lots of bright colour and big bold outlines.

Decorative work

In a school when one is looking for really decorative work to put on display - one finds that almost every five and six year old is capable of something really good to look at, four year olds are even better. However once a child becomes older and much more self critical and worried about the realism of their art, then ever the best work is much less attractive to the onlooker than the beautiful bright bold decorative and symbolic work from the infant department.

Our son-in-law is quite a connoisseur of paintings and has some lovely modern art on their walls. But he also has framed quite a few of Sam's efforts at age two and three, which scattered among the other work is most decorative and hardly recognizable as child art!

Symbolic art

You need to remember that very young children firstly draw a symbolic representation of what they are seeking to illustrate - they include what they know is there -whether they can see it or not, and whether it would be possible to see it all at once.

Art teachers suggest that we do not give children our pictures to copy as they will quickly use our symbolism rather than developing their own. If your child says "I can't draw a house" - don't say "Go and look at a house - now draw what you see", - rather ask him to think about what makes up a house and draw what is important to him - rather than copying your adult effort. Ask him to tell you about his drawing. Praise his efforts to give him confidence. Even frame them!

Other mediums

There are lots of other wonderful art mediums for children just a few of which I will mention.

Wet pastel.

Wet a page and draw on it with pastel or chalk. Hang out to dry.

Finger paint

Made from a paste of water thickened with a tablespoon of corn flour and boiled. Add food coloring. Spread on a paper, smooth out all over the paper and draw lots of patterns. When tired of it hang out to dry.

Cut and paste and collage

Use magazine pictures, coloured paper, tissues, tinsel, glitter, almost anything you can think of to make a lovely bright picture.

Clay

Much nicer to use than playdoh - can be bought from an art shop.

Printing

Use cotton wool in a saucer dampened with poster paint.

Use a lid, a piece of wood, or best still a potato cut in half to make prints. Cut a pattern on the surface of the potato.

Painting and writing sentences

EQUIPMENT

Be aware that paint stains clothes , carpets etc! Prepare with paper on the floor or a drop cloth.

Sheets of large wrapping paper, any sort of large paper. (size approx 60 cm X 90 cm)

Paint in small jars, egg containers (mix it ready).

Large brush

Thick texta pen for writing sentence

Jar to wash brush, or separate brush for each colour or don't bother about mixing colors.

Rag to wipe brush and for emergencies

Smock, apron or very old clothes (One of dad's old shirts makes a very good smock)

Easel or substitute.

Substitute easel

A sheet of maisonite, canite, three ply or even heavy cardboard approximately 1 m by 80 cm makes a very good easel.

The painting paper may easily clipped on by two bulldog clips at the top, or attached by masking tape.

The paints, water etc, should be on the floor or a low table close by, preferably in a box, or something to minimize spills. The easel can be leaned up against a firm surface on a slight angle. A child finds it easier to do large paintings standing up, however if this equipment is not available, the painting paper can be spread over a layer of newspaper on the kitchen floor

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Painting a picture

Pin up a sheet of butcher's paper on your easel if you have one, and get the equipment ready.

Discuss the mechanics of painting with your child. He will have learned some of the rules at day-care, preschool, school. He needs to be reminded to wipe his brush on the edge of the paint jar before painting or it will be likely to drip.

He needs to be reminded to wash his brush before he uses each different colour or they will quickly all turn grey. Make a fold about 20 mm from the bottom of the sheet of paper and ask him to leave that space for you to write his sentence,

Let him paint a picture and tell you about it later. (He may wish to tell you first, but a child's painting at this stage often turns into something very different to what was originally intended, as the paint is not very easy to control.)

The first attempt is likely too be largely experimental use of the paint, rather than a clear picture. Do not praise for realistic pictures at any stage.

2. Write a sentence under the picture

When he has finished, write a sentence he gives you about his painting under it in your best printing, large enough to be read from the other side of the room.

Ask him to read it to you a couple of times, then put it somewhere to dry.

3. Paint some more pictures

Let him do a couple more pictures with sentences under them if he is interested and there is time.

4. Pin pictures up

When they are dry, pin at least one or two up somewhere he can see them often for a few days, in his bedroom, or maybe the kitchen (Use blue tack and stick it to his wardrobe door).

This is so that he can read the sentences to himself over and over again. You must be sure that he knows exactly what you have written. You have to be careful to use exactly his own words, not your adaptations of them, or if you need to change it at all - to shorten it for instance - make quite sure he knows what you have changed.

Ask him to read them to you occasionally, and perhaps point out individual words.

INTRODUCTION TO ACTIVITY 7 NOTICES/ NATURE BENCH

What are these activities for?

These activities are again just a collection of the types of things that a small child like to do, planned to extend his knowledge of words and his realization of the usefulness of reading and writing

Writing of notices

In our house the writing of notices has always been a favorite occupation. *Over the years there have been many and varied notices on the children's bedroom doors - frequently such things as "No adults allowed in here" or "Elizabeth dus not want mum and dad to come into her bedroom" or "To mum and dad I am going away for a holiday under the table from Elizabeth"- written in a fit of pique.*

However there have sometimes been pitiful little notes like "To mum and dad I wish you would be kinder please. love from Elizabeth. answer" or the notes to the tooth fairy about the tooth that got lost at school - explaining why the glass was empty. As our children got older these were replaced by such things as "Do not pollute the environment" and lots of long lists of tasks to be accomplished in the holidays.

Your child's notices

The idea of this week's work is for you to write some notices at your child's suggestion, or for him to write them if he is able.

Make a nature bench

The second day's work, which revolves around planting and collecting things is suggested as an introduction to the whole area of observation of natural phenomena, and sorting and classifying and making something of what is observed. You can find many more ideas in the children's books available on science these days.

Children are very keen on making collections and this can be the beginning of a life long interest. There is an incredibly wide range of subjects to collect.

My young nephew had a collection of animal skulls -a most interesting and educational collection - assisted by his long suffering mother who used to cooperate when Martin found a skull with the flesh still on it, by boiling it down for him. I suppose that would be better than having the decaying member of the collection in the bedroom.

Set up your nature things on an appropriate bench or table near a window, or on the ledge behind the kitchen sink. Having somewhere where they can put the interesting things that they find motivates lots of observation.

I still find interesting things like bird's nests, lovely butterflies, birds eggs, I want to show to so

WEEK 7 DAY 1 MAKING NOTICES

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Cards - varying shapes and sizes

Coloring pens

Masking tape or blue tack

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

1. Revision

Read the sentences under his paintings and the labels on his picture from last week.

2. Introduce cards to make notices

Show him the cards and suggest he may like to think of some notices he would like to put around the room - **bed, window, train-set** (like they do at school). You could put them around the whole house or a larger section than his room if you can put up with this for a time.

3. Make notices at his suggestion

Keep these very simple, even to just one word if he still finds sentences difficult, but encourage him to make them really interesting if you think he can cope with this.

a) You may have to suggest the first one to him- or give him the idea e.g. **"This is Peter's bed."** printed as large as possible on the card in your best printing. (Later he will probably want to print his own.)

These can vary in difficulty from a simple **"Peter's bed."** to **"Peter sleeps in this bed every night."** for example.

b). When you have written one, get him to tape it to the appropriate place. (Masking tape and blue tack can be removed from most surfaces if you don't leave it there too long.)

c). He will probably be eager to suggest the next one, and it will probably be similar to the first. If he has difficulty thinking of one suggest "What about one about your fish?"

Some examples **"These are my books."**

"My tadpoles live in this jar"

"Teddy is sleeping in the doll's house."

4. Different types of notices

You could suggest a notice to tell someone what to do.

He will prefer to tell someone else what to do!

e.g. **"Keep this door shut."**

"Don't forget to give me my pocket money."

Encourage him to think of his own signs (and accept them in good grace).

“No adults allowed in here”

“This is my own cubby.”

“A home for my pet beetle.”

He will remember the words much better in these than the ones you suggest.

(Some children may be able to write their own signs with some help.)

If this really catches on he will find many uses of notes, to write his own lunch order, or shopping list - (**“One pink and one white icy pole”**) or a note about what to wear in the morning **“Blue shorts if hot, green dress if cold”**. and many other things, even a message in a bottle to be dropped into the sea.

ACTIVITY 7 DAY 2 MAKING A NATURE BENCH

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

- Cards - and pen
- Masking tape or blue tack
- A saucer and piece of cotton wool to cover it and hold the water.(or several saucers)
- A handful of seeds, wheat, if you have a produce store near you they will give you a handful of the wheat you used to feed to your chooks -and some other seeds too.
- Or you can use other bird seed - canary seed, wild bird seed (and put some outside in your garden to see what birds you can attract.)
- An onion, just any onion, maybe quite a largish one.
- A cream or jam bottle to fit your onion which you can fill up to the top with water so the onion can sit on the top of the bottle touching the water. (To start with - later when there are roots they will reach down into the water.) It will grow a new top.
- Empty egg shell in an egg cup - save the bottom of a boiled egg filled with a bit of soil or sand.
- A bean or nasturtium seed (these grow fast) or one your child has found perhaps. Radishes are the fastest growing of all.
- Also any nature objects your child has found lately, e.g. moths, beetles, interesting leaves, stones, nuts, seed pods, toadstools etc.

THESE ARE ENOUGH FOR SEVERAL DAYS.

If you lift a log, stone or brick outside you are almost certain to find some sort of interesting live addition for your collection. (Slaters are fine, but don't encourage interfering with ants or spiders - just look!)

WHAT YOU CAN DO

There are far too many suggestions here for just one day, but choose one or two that appeal most, and continue later with the other ideas.

1. **Read the notices made yesterday.**
2. **Discuss setting up a nature bench as at school or pre-school** (hopefully they have one too)

Find a suitable spot. For a long term project a place by a sunny window is ideal, but for a temporary initial attempt, the top of his chest of drawers or kitchen window-sill would do well.

Show him some of things and discuss starting to make a collection of nature things.

3. **Do the activity, then write a note about it.**

Choose two or more of the activities suggested below and after you have set them up together, suggest he might like to write a note so he will remember what he has planted, or so daddy will know, etc.

If you continue with the other activities later do notes to go with them too.

The notes can be as simple as “**a beetle**” or “**This elephant beetle was trying to get in my window**”.

4. **Suggested projects:**

LET HIM DO THESE WITH AS LITTLE HELP FROM YOU AS POSSIBLE.

a). **Planting wheat/ bird seed.**

Place the cotton wool on the saucer, dampen it, and sprinkle the seeds on it. Keep it damp and in the light or sun, and the wheat or bird seed will begin to shoot in a very few days.

Watch for the root and then the shoot.

Type of notice - “**I planted this canary seed.**”

“**This wheat must be watered every day.**”

or even “**This is Jack’s, do not touch it.**”

b). **Onion on a bottle**

Find a jar to fit the onion or vice versa, so it will fit without falling in, but will touch the water when the bottle is filled .

Within a few days roots will begin to appear, and later green shoots from the top.

c). **Plant a seed in an egg shell**

Save the bottom of a boiled eggshell. Fill it with soil and plant a small seed, for instance a bean seed, in it. Keep it damp

d). **Grow a carrot top**

Cut a few centimeters off the top of a carrot and put it on a saucer on damp cotton wool. The top will soon sprout again.

e.) **Grow Mustard and Cress**

Mustard and cress seeds planted on damp cotton wool or a damp tissue grow very quickly, and can be cut within about ten days and used in sandwiches.

f.) **Make a garden**

All sorts of seeds, bird seed, bulbs, cuttings, cactus, seedlings can be planted in an pot or ice cream container filled with soil (with a couple of holes in the bottom for draining and something it can sit on to catch the excess water.) .

g). **Make a collection**

This can range from a simple collection of leaves of different shapes, autumn leaves, different coloured stones, to a more complicated collection of insects, butterflies, rocks, fungi etc. about which he may find a great deal of information.

ACTIVITY 7 DAY 3 BOOK OF INTERESTING WORDS

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- Small stapled book or plain paper notebook.

Coloring pens.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. **Read all his notices**
2. **Make a book of words**

Let him choose the most interesting words from the various notices and write them in the book, a word on each page, e.g. “an onion” , “ a beetle” etc

You may write the words for him or he may copy them from the notices.

3. **Illustrate the words**

Let him draw a picture for each of the words.

Write “My book of words” or similar on the cover.

Let him read it to the rest of the family.

ACTIVITY 7 DAY 4 LABELING OBJECTS IN A PICTURE

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- Large paper
- Paint
- or old magazine, scissors, glue
- texta pens,
- cards

Make use of the paint while you have some mixed up and the easel out in the kitchen!

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Paint a picture and write a sentence again

Continue to paint pictures and write sentences under this if this was very popular.

3. Paint a picture or cut out pictures and label the objects

a). Paint a picture on a large piece of paper and then at his direction label the objects in the picture individually.

or b). Pictures may be cut or torn from a magazine and pasted to form picture on a large piece of paper - suggest he choose coloured ones. Then you ask him to name the various parts of his picture, and you write the name beside the object.

4. Make cards to match the words on the large picture

Make a card to match each of those on his picture. Let him practice putting them under the matching word, then see if he can say them without looking at his picture.

5. Play a game with the words - “Stepping Stones” , “Fishing” ,“Clap when you see”

INTRODUCTION TO ACTIVITY 8 WRITING STORIES

Ongoing activities

The final activities are to introduce you to an ongoing open-ended type of activity which can be used by a child of any age for many years but would be probably too advanced for a pre-school or Prep grade level child even if they could handle all of the previous work.

It is particularly included for the advanced child, but also because it provides a basic method of encouraging children to write freely, but without the frustration of spelling errors, or attempting to spell the words they cannot manage. It is to enable a child to get the satisfaction of expressing himself in writing with every possible assistance given - that is, providing a word to copy whenever a child needs it.

It was fashionable some years ago to encourage children to write completely freely without any concern for the correct spelling. But the fallacy of this approach is that a keen reader knows what the correct word looks like, even if he cannot remember how to reproduce it, and to tell him to be happy with something he knows is incorrect is not a good learning option in my opinion and tends to limit a child to words he knows he can spell.

Writing Stories

The first attempt will be most laborious and hard on both of you, but most children have an inbuilt desire to express themselves and once they find that you are really interested in what they write they find this a most enjoyable and fulfilling experience.

I used this for years with Prep. Grade 1, and Grade 2 children. The older ones particularly would often prefer to stay and continue writing, rather than go out for recess.

However this stage may not come for a year or so –when children can read, they can also begin to write for themselves.

If I was teaching an individual child at home long term, I would base all of my language teaching on this activity.

Reading Activity

Through this activity children extend their reading ability - they must re-read what they have written frequently as they go on to the next phrase or sentence. It is also the most natural way to teach spelling and punctuation.

Individual dictionary

Initially it is probably easier to use a sheet of paper or card rather than an individual dictionary, to help a child to spell the word they wish to use, and you will have to write every word. However a child soon remembers the words he uses frequently. Once he starts to use a simple dictionary, he builds up his own collection of words that he likes to use.

A suitable dictionary could be bought commercially, and these are plain paper exercises with a letter of the alphabet printed on each page and perhaps a few commonly used words also. However you can easily make one from a notebook in which you write the alphabet - one letter to each page, (make sure it has at least 25 pages - you can have XYZ on the last page). Or you can buy a "Where is it?" book with the alphabet already printed on each page and easily found. This has an advantage as your very young child will spend much time looking for the appropriate letter as it is quite a complex skill remembering the order of the alphabet well enough to isolate a single letter. That is why a card is more suitable at first.. (But I would be happy if a child tries to write a word himself and gets it wrong. I would write it correctly on his work though.)

If you have a child who is away from school for any time traveling or ill, for instance, I would suggest keeping a diary using a dictionary to enable him to write what he wishes, and this would adequately cover a large amount of the work he would be doing at school.

With my grade 1 or 2 class in school I would spend a very considerable part of each morning with this type of work, which can be more efficiently done in an individual situation with one child and a teacher to provide the words immediately and read the ensuing work appreciatively as soon as it is completed. At school the children would sometimes do diary work - that is keeping a record of their own days, and other times write on topics that I suggest or of their own choice.

I would advocate the use of such a dictionary with children up to grade 5 or 6 if necessary as I believe children should not be inhibited in what they write by difficulty in spelling, but also believe that by writing a word incorrectly when writing completely freely, the child impresses that incorrect spelling on his mind when he might as well be learning the correct way.

ACTIVITY 8 DAY 1 INTRODUCING INDIVIDUAL DICTIONARIES

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- Writing paper
- Individual dictionary with a blank page for each letter of the alphabet on which words may be written at the child's request,
- Soft pencil (2B)
- Rubber to remove unintentional errors. Children really appreciate this.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Introduce song/ditty "abc-defg-hi-jk-lm,no-pq-rs-tu-vwxyz"

to begin to teach the order of the alphabet -helpful when trying to find something in a dictionary. Revise it as a song frequently.

2. Introduce and explain dictionary

Spend some time looking at the dictionary.

Explain that you only write in the dictionary and he copies it.

Explain that when he is writing something and he doesn't know how to write the word he can look in the book to find the word he needs. If it is not there you will write it for him.

Explain how to use the index and how to find the right page for the word. Once he has been using this for a little while, he should be encouraged to find the right page and check to see if the word is already there.

But at first you will probably have to help him a great deal, and often find the page for him, or it will slow him down too much, and he will be likely to lose interest.

3. Encourage him to think of a sentence he wants to write and write it.

Maybe he can draw a picture first, or you suggest a topic - "His day at school", "His pet" and try out his new dictionary.

For the first few sentences you will probably need to write every word into his book before he copies it. Then you will find as he tends to use similar vocabulary and sentence structure from day to day, gradually he will be able to look up most words or remember them, and only need to be given new nouns and verbs etc.

Be very appreciative of his earliest efforts, as they require a large amount of concentration and effort from a child, even if they are not perfect in your eyes. But expect them to improve.

I have found that children's own undirected writing can be amazing. Let them use their own ideas and imaginations.

I can always tell if written work is teacher directed or child directed – the child directed work is much better, and more interesting.

ACTIVITY 8 DAY 2 WRITING A LETTER OR EMAIL TO GRANDMA, WRITING ABOUT A BALLOON

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

- Writing paper
- Individual dictionary
- Coloring pen or soft pencil(2B),
- Envelope and stamp
- ballons

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

1. **Practice ditty “abc-defg-hi-jk-lm,no-pq-rs-tu-vwxyz”**

2. **Introduce letter paper, envelope and stamp.**

Discuss where you put the stamp, where you can post your letter, or how you address an email

3. **Write a letter to Grandma , or maybe just write an email**

or some other friend who would be prepared to write an answer, or even daddy at work.

Use dictionary to find words to use in writing a letter to send in the envelope.

4. **Address and post his letter or send the email. Straight away!**

And word up grandma to answer immediately.

4. **Writing topic for another day - write about a new balloon**

Blow up a new balloon. Write a story about it - describe it, what it could be used for, what may happen to it.

Play with it as a reward for good writing.

ACTIVITY 8 DAY 3 WRITING MORE SENTENCES

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- Writing paper
- Individual dictionary
- Coloring pen or soft pencil(2B),
- Rubber

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Continue to practice ditty “abc-defg-hi-jk-lm,no-pq-rs-tu-vwxyz”

Practice finding a letter in the dictionary.

2. Continue writing sentences using dictionary.

Try to continue with this every day if he can cope, writing a sentence every day or so. Even if it is difficult at first it rapidly becomes easier. You can suggest a topic if he cannot think of anything to write about, but if you are really interested in his ideas, he will develop confidence in his own ability.

Some topics to get him started:

All about himself.

All about mum, dad, his whole family, his pet.

His best friend, his favorite toy

Dogs, cats, birds, elephants

Later more imaginative e.g. “I am invisible.” “I am an ant.” “I am an astronaut.”

But generally the best approach if he is tentative, is to suggest writing about something that happened that day, and he will gradually get used to thinking about this and remembering something he would like to write about.

INTRODUCTION TO ACTIVITY 9 USING COMPUTERS

Playing around

If you have a home computer it is most probable that your child already has some experience on it and maybe can do all sorts of things with it. Of course, you have already taught that a computer is mummy or daddy's valuable work tool and is not a plaything, as they can be damaged.

There are many programs commercially available to teach phonics, sounding, and such things - search on the internet. Like many of the commercially available activity books, these tend to be much more complex than this program and expensive, but could be good if you have a child you cannot motivate, or for extra practice in any of the activity areas.

It won't be long before your child is wanting to use the internet and email his friends. *One of the mums at a dinner party said that she emails her older children in their rooms from the kitchen to tell them that tea is ready!*

Where to start

One interesting place to start is with a drawing program using the mouse. He can have fun changing the colors of the paint and the brush sizes. But the mouse is not really easy to control.

Another place to start is with you writing words your child knows. (Set the font and size at a suitable level, about 18 point, I suggest.)

Show your child how what you type or draw can be printed out.

Then you can type sentences for your child to read.

When you get to three letter words show your child where to find a "Y" for "yes" and a "N" for "no" and type sentences in the form of question.

Computer keyboards have capital letters

It is a problem that a computer keyboard has capital letters and although many are similar to lower case, the upper case letters also have to be learned. Don't start this too early or it will confuse your child who is just successfully learning lower case.

It is also very slow typing for a child to find the letter he wants even if he recognizes it.

(We used to teach touch typing to all our children from year 2 of primary school - there are good programs to do this at home).

Making his own words and sentences on the computer is something that he will enjoy doing as soon as he can read a little and is an essential tool to be mastered in our world.

You will have to teach him the shift key, the return key, the delete key and the space bar before he can get very far.

CHAPTER 6 HISTORY OF THE PROGRAM

How it all started

The material in this book was all developed many years ago when my children were small, and I was teaching five year old children to read and planning to do a major research project for a master's degree.

I decided to research what was of utmost interest to me at that time - how could I best assist my own daughters' development and learning.

At that time it was strongly considered by the vast majority of teachers that parents should not interfere in any way in the important parts of a child's education, such as teaching him or her to read, as this would be harmful, not helpful.

I wanted to test whether this was really the case as I was keen to teach my own children and I believed other parents would like to be given permission to do so also.

I wrote some of the first instruction sheets for a doctor father whose son was in a remedial group I was taking and he was worried about his son's progress and keen to give him additional help. Then I had a friend whose child was really bored at school because they were not going fast enough for him. The activities were planned to have the flexibility to cater for quite differing ages and abilities. I prepared a series of twelve weeks of sessions that a parent could do in an informal way with a child of about five.

Developing the program

The first daily program was originally typed in two carbon copies. The suggestions included things that I had used informally when playing with Lindy, or observed her using herself when playing with material we had around the house. To make sure the instructions could be followed I would then give the typed sheet to my long suffering husband, a consulting engineer with no previous teaching experience, together with the equipment needed and watch him try the activities with Lindy by following the written instructions alone. These turned out to be absolutely hilarious sessions for the three of us, but also of real value.

The other teachers at my school did not approve of my ideas but I wanted to test whether they worked.

Experimental study using the program

I set up my study with four groups of volunteer parents and their five year olds, and four matched control groups- (a control group and experimental group from each of four different schools.) None of the children could read at the beginning of the study, but at the end of the three months the control group of children were tested and found to have a reading age on average of three months from their school instruction, but the children whose parents had spent twelve weeks

working with them through the sessions you have here (there have been some slight modifications) had an average reading age of six months, double that of the control group, which was a statistically significant result - that is it could not have been achieved by chance.

Test results

The greatest improvement appeared in the test of word synthesis - sounding out words - which is a skill which, when, developed leads quite quickly to independence in reading.

More details of program

To make the control and experimental groups more even it was ensured that an even number of boys and girls were selected, and that an even number of children from each school class. The children of volunteer parents were allotted at random to the control group or the experimental groups until these groups were complete.

I am telling you this to encourage you that this is material that has been shown to work in a strictly controlled experiment and you should have some real success with it.

However there were some things provided in the experiment that I can't give you in a book.

What else do you need?

Firstly I believed that parents had to understand a little about why they were doing certain things and this information was shared with them in their groups of twelve parents - all mothers - in a weekly meeting. (I think we would have fathers too today!)

You have all this information that was shared, in the initial chapters of this book. But also all the equipment needed was provided weekly, and you will need to find most of this yourself. Some of it has been included in the book, but there is much you need to find because (even though it is generally unexceptional) it is motivating to your child. And finally with all the groups who have formally done this program we have had a weekly sharing meeting with myself or another teacher providing support.

Original program meetings

These meetings were great! For one hour during each of the twelve weeks I met with each of the four groups of mothers somewhere in their child's school - in the canteen, or a back room or just in the corridor. The mothers came each week to tell us how things were going. They reported that they could work with their own child, they could see how he was learning - sometimes frustratingly slowly, sometimes incredibly quickly. We marveled together over similar

triumphs and groaned together over the unbelievable difficulties in leading a child to hear that “c” plus “a” plus “t” says cat, and then reported with glee when he finally started to “get it”.

Finding time

A large proportion of the mothers found that once they had initiated a learning time together it was their child who begged for more and kept them at it. Of course they all found difficulties in fitting in the time - some did it before breakfast, others missed every day for a fortnight, one lady had a baby (her fifth I think) but only missed one week’s meeting, but she was back with a pink-shawled bundle in a “carry cot” the next week.

Parent skills

I tried to encourage these parents, but more than anything they encouraged me, with their keenness, their understanding of their own children’s problems and their universal concern for their child’s best welfare. They were many of them, concerned that the school was not meeting their child’s needs (this was during their child’s first weeks at school - they were also most appreciative of their child’s teacher’s skill and patience) and they were very grateful for the knowledge of how to fill the gaps.

Obviously there were individual differences - and quite vast differences in achievement, and it must have been discouraging to the mothers whose children learned less quickly. However they all battled on, glad to know where their child stood and able to give him the extra he or she needed.

Self motivation

The weekly meetings motivated the parents - particularly as each week we all shared how we had got on, so you would feel bad if you had to say you had not got around to doing anything. (I participated as a parent with our second daughter in the second year). In the first study parents agreed to attempt to do three or four sessions a week, but as I repeated this program with dozens of other groups in subsequent years there was no such agreement but I know that many people found the weekly meetings valuable and that it was helpful to share their frustrations and triumphs. One mother compared it to a “weight watcher’s” meeting!

You might like to find a friend who would do the activities at the same time as you and you could come together regularly to share how you are going. But also you may wish to just do it at your leisure - though I would warn you, you will never get around to it if you do not give it some priority.

Other research findings

You may be interested in some other things that my research attempted to clarify. I hypothesized that parents from different socioeconomic groups would differ in

their ability to teach their children, and the parents from privileged backgrounds may not need the assistance provided in this book - that is that those volunteer parents in the control groups from the privileged areas would do as well as those in the experimental groups, or at least better than the less privileged group. But this was definitely not the case. Both children from privileged backgrounds and those from schools in the least privileged areas I could find, all improved their reading levels similarly - that is doubled their learning rate over the period.

That is, even you people who are reading this book, who know a great deal about stimulating your children, need the sort of help provided in this book to actually teach reading to your child efficiently.

Socioeconomic group selection

Two of the schools were in areas where almost all of the parents we're in the highest status levels according to a current socioeconomic study - e.g, lawyers, engineers, doctors and managers were the major occupational groups. In the other two schools the parents were almost without exception from the lower three socioeconomic status levels according to the same scale. e.g. manual workers, drivers, process workers, laborers etc. The schools were also in a state housing commission area, houses there be being allocated after a means test. The other schools were in high status suburbs with beautiful and expensive housing, leafy streets and lovely gardens.

I also established very clearly that parents were very keen to work with their own children and to learn what they could do, with levels of volunteering up to 65% of parents, with the main restriction on volunteering being whether they were available at the time of the weekly meetings. (Not so many mothers were working then as now!)

Volunteers

Volunteers varied from 36% to 76% of parents of first year students at the schools. There were more from the high status schools, for reasons mainly associated to their ability to attend a daytime session or availability of transport to the school. More of the lower status parents were in full time employment and unable to get away during the day. (If night time meetings had been available, we would have had much higher levels of volunteering.)

The results showed the very considerable teaching ability of the mothers, and can be extrapolated to parents generally. It showed that a child does not become bored or confused by different teaching methods or upset by unskilled teaching but does particularly well with individual assistance by someone who becomes really familiar with his own methods of learning.

CHAPTER 7 PROBLEMS TO BE SOLVED

Problem one - won't he get bored?

One of the questions I have had put to me time and time again is: what happens if my child gets ahead of the class and the teacher does not make any provision for him, won't he get bored?

My answer should be that these days teachers are trained to teach each child as an individual at his own rate and develop his full potential - to know his ability and achievement and cater for this.

And some teachers can and do this well. But all teachers are human and sometimes it is hard to find just what a child does know, and it is always hard to cater for multiple levels of achievement.

It is the fate of many really bright children that they never learn anything new at school, ever! They always figure it out for themselves before the teacher gets there - they are then used to help the teacher to teach the slower children. Probably this does not really matter. But what does matter is that from somewhere, other than the school if necessary, the child has a source of learning. And for most children this can only be with the help of his parents. Fortunately these days there are really good libraries available, including children's libraries, computer programs and the internet.

If you can afford to buy books for your child, do so; but select them well as a child needs to read most books and then discard them and read another, if he is reading for interest and new information. A library is the only source of the many, many books a child can read.

Museums as a source of information

It occurred to me as our three and a half year old granddaughter was explaining to me why it is dark in Canada when it is light here - which had been explained to her by her cousin- (how the sun goes round the earth etc) that I would soon run out of appropriate information for her in a very few year's time, were I her parent.

But things like museums and the internet can supplement books. Trips to see things- whether it is a farm or a railway station - always provide a wonderful source of information for children - particularly if a knowledgeable adult can answer their questions. (These days your children are likely to learn about climbing steps on a Jumbo Jet or observing different foods in a cafe in Europe - our life has so changed!)

Will your child be bored?

But back to the original question - will your child not get bored at school if he learns at home? If he is really bright he will get ahead of the others any way, and if he does not have the opportunity to learn as fast as he can he will become bored anyway.

My surgeon related that his grandchild came home from her first day at kindergarten and was asked how she liked it. "It was all right " she said "but it was not really very stimulating."

Teachers have real difficulty identifying really bright children, (they do not like us as parents to make suggestions about our own children, expecting us to be biased) and if you have helped your child to go ahead it may help the teacher to identify and assist your child in the future. (Some extra intelligent children are not identified and become naughty, unhappy, or misfits). But generally I believe most really bright children enjoy their school life, and are free to develop opportunities for leadership, lateral exploration of subjects and even teaching other children. But I also believe that a parent at home can provide much of the help at home to develop their children to their fullest potential.

What if my child is just average or having difficulty?

If your child is (or appears) just an average or above average child, is there any point in taking him further ahead?

Well unfortunately the children who are really achieving well at school, are in the "top" group, and are praised for doing well, these children get a very different view of school and learning from those who are just average or struggling. Therefore if your help can lift your child into this group, it is greatly to their advantage.

It can also help greatly to ensure your child is confident he can cope, enjoys learning and finds school relevant and of value.

If your child finds school irrelevant he will not learn.

As a principal I used to sit in classes assessing students or teachers teaching a class and wonder about those children I could see who were obviously not at all connected and obviously not learning, wondering what was going on in their minds.

Then I had the task of assessing the teaching of the language teachers in my school who were teaching German which I had never learned. I would sit in a lesson and watch the child -teacher interaction, the children's responses, and all the peripherals. One day when I came out of one of those lessons I realized that I had not any idea of what the content of the lesson had been. I was just not interested in learning German. I had completely "turned off " as regard to the content of the lesson. I had done exactly the same as those children who found their teacher's subject matter irrelevant.

I then realized that is what many children do when a subject does not interest or engage them, or particularly if they think it will be too hard.

By introducing your child to reading in a fun way and showing him that he can succeed you can prevent this lack of engagement or reconnect him if he has turned off.

How does my child compare?

Parents of children who have not had much contact with other children are always unsure of how their child compares with the other children of his age. (They ask for this information from the school sometimes but only really want to know when it is positive! If you do not know you can treat your child as if he has all the potential in the world - which he has!)

Even parents with lots of experience have worries and find it hard to judge how their child is going. *I can remember having several other children from Lindy's pre-school group playing and finding that they could all do jigsaws much more difficult than those at pre-school not just Lindy.* I also had access to various tests which I used to reassure my doubts.

This is particularly so if it is your first child. When you get to your second one you realize it does not really matter. But that is not much help to you now if you feel your child is not keeping up.

Individual differences

The most important thing I can say is that individual differences at pre school level are incredibly wide, and often they don't mean anything at all or very little.

I had an interesting experience of identifying ten children in their first months of school aged four and a half to five from four different classes who the teachers and I thought were at risk. I was to work intensively with these children in the part time I had at the school. Then for some reason I was assigned to another job. At the end of the year I was able to revisit those children who had had no extra help in the meantime. Only two of them were still having trouble or were anywhere but in the middle or even top of their group!

Individual children have peaks and troughs in their development all the time. That is, children who are slower to develop at some level often catch up and overtake their early achieving mates.. But from my many years of experience, the children whose parents care and help, almost always do really well in the long run, even though they may have glitches along the way.

Our Lizzie was very late to talk and did not do particularly well at Primary school. her fourth grade teacher told me she was not very bright (like her sister), but she was "just a darling". But as a Professor of neuroscience, she now keeps her neurosurgeon sister running to keep up with her these days!

I noticed as a principal in the same school for many years that the best predictor of how a child would turn out in secondary school years was taking a good look at their parents - their level of education, their stability, their willingness to put themselves out for their children, rather than their child's achievement in their first year.

IQ testing of four year olds

I was quite interested in predicting children's potential when I was a Prep teacher and tried doing IQ tests at the beginning of the year to see how that would correlate with their achievement at the end of the year.

And what I found year after year was that the results I was able to get from the IQ tests had no correlation with end of the year achievement.

The one thing that I did learn from this was that almost all four and five year olds generally had another agenda when scoring an IQ test . Why? Well some of them were not interested in that game at all today! When asked to mark a certain item they decided that one further down the page was more interesting, or they just felt like drawing a picture of a dog . There was all sorts of lateral thinking - but not helpful in scoring a standardized test and no real indication of their later ability to learn or contribute.

Lateral thinking

Your child may not be cooperative or fit in the normal mould. It does not mean that he is not bright or normal. It is not at all unusual for all preschoolers, maybe particularly the bright ones. You will find this syndrome when you are trying to do the program, maybe every day. Try to channel it - let your child direct proceedings, or happily switch to writing "dog" or whatever instead of "cat" when he wants to be contrary- let him direct his own learning as much as possible.

What if my child can read when he goes to school?

I can say from personal experience, that the teacher may not even notice! And I wouldn't point this out to the teacher if this is the case.

Giving your child's teacher helpful advice

Please consider very carefully whether you ever point out to a teacher anything that could be considered criticizing his or her professional competence! For example if you consider the books she gives your child are too simple - even if you KNOW you are right! Just be very much aware that the teacher young or old, under her very confident exterior is probably afraid of parents and afraid of her lack of knowledge. Because of this she will be very defensive when a parent tells her what she considers is how to do her job. She may take no notice of your very helpful suggestions and may resent them greatly. This may not worry you, but she may transfer this resentment to your child - so DO be careful!

If your child has started reading at home, continue from where you are at unless the school takes it up where your child is. The work at school even if it is "old hat" will still be good for consolidation and revision, and will develop a real sense of mastery and your child will quickly be allocated to the most advanced group. And because of individual differences some children will move away ahead of the others anyhow.

My first daughter's teacher anxiously confessed that she didn't really think she had taught Lindy anything. But in her Prep year Lindy had gained much in confidence, social learning and responsibility on which she was able to concentrate her energies because she did not have to worry about mastering the basic skills.

Fortunately Lindy became a compulsive reader from a very early age and when this really happens not only is learning easy but like a real addict, the young reader becomes expert at acquiring more of the same to keep her going, whether by pestering her mother to take her to the library, borrowing from her friends and relations or reading anything within reach such as news papers and encyclopedias.

My second daughter's very alert teacher recognized her ability to read within her first week at school, and conscientiously tried to cater for her, but I don't think it really made that much difference. Her teachers considered whether she should be promoted to the next grade, but I do not think that this is the aim of early teaching and should only be considered for children who cannot be catered for at all within their age group.

Children expected to have some reading skills

My daughter tells me that these days anyhow some schools expect a child to come to school with some reading skills, to be able to write their name etc. and in some of the various states this is taught at various stages of preschool before a child goes to big school. Certainly there is a much greater preparedness for formal learning than we saw many years ago.

What if your child is uncooperative?

HOW DO YOU GET COOPERATION FROM A RELUCTANT FIVE YEAR OLD?

THE ANSWER - POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT! IT WORKS!

For those of you who have trouble getting your children to cooperate, can I pass on to you what I learned while doing lectures in psychology and also teaching a grade of four and a half to five year olds.

At my lectures I learned all about negative and positive reinforcement and what Skinner (a famous psychologist) had found out from studies with his rats, followed up by other people's studies with other animals and human beings.

Basically these studies all showed that positive reinforcement (that is rewards) was MUCH MORE VALUABLE THAN NEGATIVE (that is punishment) in changing a rat's or a human's behavior, much faster, more efficient, more reliable.

Now I think we all know this deep down, but as parents and teachers many of us tend to use negative comments as reinforcement at least as much as positive.

Anyhow between lectures I decided I would try to use only positive reinforcement with my grade of five year olds - I don't mean providing physical or tangible

rewards but only praise and approval, and cut out ALL the punishments, threats and growling sessions, to see if it worked. And can I tell you IT DID!

It was fantastic! I believe five year olds respond better than any other age group of children - but so long as I would continue to praise and reward them I never needed to growl or punish **at all**. But the thing I found out was that I couldn't stand it - I just had to blow my top sometimes even if they were perfect, as I didn't always feel like only telling them know good they were.

However, can I reiterate, it does work with both groups of children and one individual child. Sometimes you have to search for the first thing to praise or reward, but they come more frequently once you start. The sad thing is that we as parents don't use it as much as we could.

If I would go into an unruly class in my school I could spend several minutes and much energy saying "Sit down over there" "Stop talking over there" "Sit up straight" "Come out to me" before everyone was really cooperating - but if I would quietly say "I really appreciate the way Tom is behaving" selecting the one child not misbehaving, I will immediately find another child to praise, and within seconds and without any stress have a cooperative class.

SO IF YOUR CHILD IS HARD TO HANDLE, TRY REWARDING HIS GOOD BEHAVIOR AND IGNORING HIS NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR, AND IF YOU CAN KEEP IT UP, I GUARANTEE IT WILL WORK.

HOW TO REWARD?

I believe that in all but the most difficult cases this can be through your own praise and approval and appreciation. However sometimes you may have to build this up with more tangible rewards.

One of our mums was telling us about training dogs at our last discussion of this topic, and said that with dogs you start with biscuits and then finally just a "Good boy" is enough reward.

Obtaining cooperation - some tips

NEVER make a demand that is not able to be obeyed!! This seems self evident - but what do you do if a demand is not complied with? "We are not going out until you pick up every toy on the floor in your bedroom!" Do you really intend to stay home for the next three weeks? So you give in and each time your ultimatum has less and less effect. Much better require that all the toys in the corner are picked up or enough to fill the toy box - what are you going to do with the others anyway?!

Following on from this - in this program be careful to tread the line between providing something new and challenging, and asking your child to do something that is REALLY TOO HARD for them. The reaction will be "I don't want to play this game any more" or maybe a tantrum.

CHAPTER 8 HELP FOR OLDER CHILDREN AND CHILDREN WITH SERIOUS READING PROBLEMS

Who is the program designed for?

The program was also originally designed for a child who needed to be extended and a child with learning problems.. By using the various methods described in the daily sessions you could take your child at his own pace right through to writing words and multiple sentences.

It could be used by a parent with a child on an extended holiday or when he is confined to bed for a lengthy period. It can be used in full or by just taking bits that suit your child.

It can be used if you are home schooling your child at home for whatever reason.

It can be used, as was originally designed in conjunction with normal schooling.

Assisting a child who is falling behind and needs extra help at any stage.

Almost all the activities can be used for a child in his second or third year at school who for some reason has not grasped the initial stages - or in fact modified to suit your child it could be used at any stage.

Diagnosis of reading problems?

As a principal of a school I was quite frequently approached by parents of children who were not, in their opinion proceeding satisfactorily, generally in reading, with a request that we immediately find out WHAT IS WRONG!

Although it may be valuable to diagnose the causes of reading difficulty in a particular child, I have found as a teacher, however varied the diagnosis may be, the remedies are almost all the same, just more intensive efforts to teach the child efficiently using the methods that suit him best.

Unless there is some physical problem such as hearing or eyesight deficit, there is no magic cure for poor memory, lack of concentration - or a more common problem - lack of motivation.

I also did a frustrating post graduate university course on Remedial reading. We spent three quarters of the course on diagnosis of dyslexia, and reading problems- then one term on what to do about all these problems - and the only answer was - **just more intensive and appropriate and imaginative teaching.**

Helping a child with serious reading problems

The only way to help a child is for someone who has the time and sufficient expertise, but most importantly, cares sufficiently, to give the child continuous help at the level he is at, at the moment. This often requires much repetition of vocabulary, much re-teaching of basic phonic symbols and blending skills and hours of painful listening to stumbling reading, giving the correct feedback to a

child to enable him to finally remember those words. Also of such importance is that someone really is willing to give him the encouragement to keep battling on. Usually the only person available to do all this is a parent.

Some schools now have small group programs such as Reading Recovery, but in a general classroom the teacher only has time to give a very small amount of extra help while dealing with the class at all of its various levels of achievement.

With the material in this program a caring parent or grandparent would have sufficient knowledge and is likely to be the only who cares enough to give their child the help he needs.

But I suggest that for those of you who have the chance, make sure that this never occurs by

Developing a helping relationship with older children

One of the reason that this program was written for four and five year olds is that at that stage and younger they are most receptive to parental help - and if it is offered and accepted then a good working relationship can be developed easily.

Although it may be more difficult helping a child who is having difficulties, I believe the activities here are suitable, with some adaptation, for a beginner reader of pretty well any age. And at any age a child is very happy to accept the undivided attention of a caring adult.

Once a child can read reasonably well, writing becomes the most valuable activity with an older child.

How do you continue to develop your child's reading ?

I believe the most important way is through the constant provision of suitable and highly motivating reading material - gradually extending the difficulty of the material as your child can cope with it.

Reading aloud at home

Maybe! You may initially help by hearing your child read aloud, but even early on, a child should learn that he is reading to himself for his own meaning. At first a child reads aloud for his own assistance - that is it helps him get the meaning from what he is reading, but he soon needs encouragement to read silently.

With a grade 1 children I found that they loved to read to themselves and we would often have free reading periods, but in the early stages I used to take them out on to the oval for it, because when the majority was still reading aloud, the noise in the classroom of thirty children enthusiastically reading their own books to themselves was overwhelming,

Accurate reading?

I don't believe that one needs to be very concerned about completely accurate reading at any stage, however at each stage you need to check by occasional oral reading checks that your child's silent reading is not too inaccurate. I

believe that if he continues to read enthusiastically these inaccuracies will gradually disappear - and I would remind you that at all stages guesswork plays a very considerable part in reading.

By the way it is my guess that many children are turned off reading by the continued oral reading that they are subjected to - reading to "Reading mothers" at school, reading aloud to parents at home. I'm afraid that I would let my daughters read their readers silently at home and tell me when they had finished and I would tick their card!

There are a number of publications to help you to work on specific tasks with your child - such as teaching him the various sound combinations - ":oo", "ough" for instance - if he has missed being taught.

Extending phonics learning

Basically, I am a great believer that the best way to teach reading, after the initial stages have been covered, is by more and more reading in a graduated diet.

Source of reading material

Your children's library will have a wide variety of books - starting from simple books for beginner readers.

Obtaining books on a kindle or tablet is a simple and easy way to find books for children, but not as inexpensive as a library.

The size of the print in a book can be a good quick guide to you regarding its difficulty. There are many good, well written paperback books available for children these days.

What if your child doesn't want to read?

This is the most difficult problem and a very common one indeed once a child is seven or eight or older.

I do not believe the answer is to ignore this and wait until he wants to read again. I don't believe that this is likely to happen. The children in his grade who are still reading enthusiastically will be moving far ahead, while he is at a standstill. The type of story he wishes to read will be getting harder and harder and his skill will not be increasing proportionally unless he is reading.

But how do you interest him? Do you insist he reads even though he doesn't want to?

Of course it is impossible to make a child read, if he absolutely refuses - and you must be careful not to get into a confrontation situation where he refuses to cooperate because you are really pushing him too hard.

Why does he not like to read?

One of the reasons for a lack of desire to read is because he is not very good at it.

One of the remedies for this problem is to make sure that he has books available that he finds easy - even if you think he should be reading more difficult things. Some authorities suggest that all a child's reading for pleasure should be with books that are much simpler than those he can really read.

I recently heard a mathematics teacher who had had great success with remedial teaching of mathematics say - make sure that the learner has some success immediately - success is the great motivator for further learning.

Some times you need to find books from those available that are not particularly good literature. – It used to be the many Enid Blyton titles, which were easy to read but very trivial in their content. This type of book is good for encouraging a reluctant reader.

Some motivating ideas:

If your child wants to read a book he is more likely to be willing to struggle through it. And every time he reads a book his skill and speed improves. Let him choose a new book or books to buy himself and let him have the new one only when he has finished the first one.

Read the first chapter or two to him to get him into the book, or alternative chapters to help him stay interested in the story.

Ask him to read to a younger sibling or help a younger child with his reading.

Highly promoted books like the Harry Potter series can also motivate reluctant readers to attempt more difficult reading.

I can remember a little aboriginal boy sitting down and persevering with the third Harry Potter book when he was only about seven years old.

Some other young readers are not particularly attracted to fiction.

One of our sons-in-law preferred to read the "Guinness book of records". My husband loved reading encyclopedias. I can remember providing the sports pages of the local rag to a year 5 remedial group of boys each week.

These days there are other things too like, code books, and the phone messages from your friends..

Reading his own writing

With a very reluctant older reader who really needed much help, I would work to encourage and assist him to write his own material, diaries, stories, documentary material (see experience reading and writing.). I would then type it up, have him illustrate it, bind it, and encourage him to share it to anyone he could find. I would do this over and over until I had a break through.

No time?

Another reason why he is not really interested in reading may be because he has no time, or other things to do with the time he has.

Television and computer games can often be the culprit here - and is I believe a terrible waster of children's time. You could limit the amount of screen time to the amount of time spent reading - or something similar.

Our second hand black and white television broke down when Lizzie was in year eleven and I offered to buy a new colour one but to my surprise, she asked that we put it off until she had finished her final year of school!

Earlier Lizzie had a period when she was too busy to read- we agreed that she would read for half an hour a day, and usually this was the last half hour before she put the light out. Sometimes it was before school, or as an incentive instead of some chore such as drying the dishes. If we forgot she had to stay up until it was done.

Then she had a teacher who allowed the class to have large amounts of free reading time, and she got hooked,

Child controlled learning

This program spends much time giving children the tools with which to learn to read, and many of the activities can be continued by the child in his or her own way to provide child directed learning, which is different from teaching.

It is the most effective and productive type of learning and what a pre school child does most of the time. You provide the setting and your child learns from what he takes from it. Here we are providing one basic technique - matching - that a child can use to teach himself about words and then letters. We then encourage child to listen, and more matching and listening enables a child to learn to recognize sounds and letters and put them together. The games provide a little more fun in the practice periods, then learning to write provides the skill by which to express oneself and continue one's education indefinitely.

Lindy taught herself to recognize all her letters with only some brief initial help from me. She was prepared to use her alphabet book as the reference and compare her individual letter cards with the letter in the book, until she could remember what each letter sound was. She continually sorted the letter cards into the ones she could remember and the ones she had to check until the last pile was nonexistent.

John Holt author of "How Children Fail"

My advice is always to let the children determine what happens, give children as much access to ... the world around them as possible. See which things interest them most and help them go down that particular road.

Most of all youngsters are- by nature- curious and eager to learn ...babies are such active skillful seekers of knowledge that they learn more in the first five years of their lives than most other folks do in ten.

I learned to let the children I taught take a great deal of control of their own learning partly by accident.

I always believed that I should set up the learning environment and let them do the learning. But the year after I had been lecturing in Infant School Method I went back to the job I loved with children. I had a lovely composite class of somewhat underprivileged country children. But I was also doing the final year of my arts degree by correspondence. I'm afraid that some times things like the broadcast biweekly French dictation practice test were mid morning. My children became absolutely excellent at going on with their own work when I had mine to do.

I was astonished to discover that my children could learn better without me. I provided the setting and the prompts but they had a great deal of control over what they would spend their time doing - they could do formal work or informal, but they produced some of the best written work and art - I had ever seen - individual, imaginative some time even nearly inspired! I never again closely controlled a grade's learning but always gave an even larger amount of latitude than I had done previously

CHAPTER 9 READING READINESS

When is your child able to learn to read?

You are at the stage when you are ready to teach your child to read. Or maybe you have already done so by now.

But maybe you are asking should I be starting now? Is he ready.? When will he be ready?

My answer is - probably when he is able to learn to talk! This may be considered heresy, but when you think about deaf children who are able to learn sign language instead of verbal language - we could probably teach a child to read written words instead of verbal language.

Basically a child can read anything he has words for. But practically for it to be worth while teaching a child to read he must have a good enough vocabulary to make reading useful

Visual discrimination

He must also have the ability to visually discriminate the difference between words.

This depends on his experience and is not often dependent on his physical development unless there is a physical problem - poor eye-sight or a serious visual discrimination problem which is a cause of great difficulty in learning to read and is really very rare. (The only cure/ solution is lots more experience than for normal children)

Your two year old is quite able to differentiate between different letters and words I am sure. Sam at two was looking at a news paper and remarked without any prompting "I can see a "s" for Sam." and he could find the letters he knew in any reading material. This is much more difficult than just recognizing the Macdonald's sign.

You may be surprised that when you read this book about parent help, there is very little emphasis on preparing a child to read.

I believe in this modern world, and with parents who are sensitive to reading most children are well prepared for reading by about four or earlier.

This is developed by all the things that you have been doing since your child was born.

What you already do that develops reading readiness.

You talk to your child.

You listen to your child.

You read to him daily.

You take him places - the park, the supermarket, the beach, or whatever much more adventurous places you can find - camping? Paris? the opera? - if you can!

You make sure he is aware of words all around him, his name, the supermarket signs, your street sign, letters from Grandma.

You provide stimulating toys - including jigsaws, crayons and paper, chalk and black boards, paint and an easel, scissors and clay.

You encourage him to listen to music and stories, well chosen videos, interactive computer programs.

You may notice I have not included television - it will be there but is more of a dumbing down experience than a stimulating one in my opinion. But I must admit that in the absence of more positive preparation, it does have an influence.

But even if you have not been doing any of these things consciously, much of it is happening

How do you know your child is ready?

Visual memory

Physically, as I have already said, the ability to recognize words by their shape. When at eighteen months to two years he is able to differentiate between four or five different animal shapes and put them into a jigsaw puzzle (he has real difficulty in controlling his hands to put them in the right place, but he knows where each one goes) he would physically be able to differentiate between different word patterns too, or very soon afterwards.

All the playing with jigsaws, looking at picture books, trying to copy pictures or even words (his own name, Grandma's name on her card), makes him aware of the differences between letters and words and will sharpen up his ability to visually discriminate word patterns.

Writing is much more difficult as it is really affected by physical development.

Watching Jemma who could really easily recognize her own name trying to copy it for the first time showed me how hard it was. She couldn't make the crayon go any where like where she wanted it to go even though she had had lots of practice with crayons.

By the way one of the tests of a child's physical coordination is the ability to make or copy a cross. Again I have been amazed at how hard this is. Try it occasionally to see how your child is developing. Making straight lines and circles develops earlier.

Sound differentiation

He needs to be able to differentiate sounds orally. Before he can understand that "n" says "nnn" and "m" says "mm". he has to be able to hear the difference.

I believe that in most children this occurs considerable later than visual discrimination. Children who are still having trouble with their speech may find this difficult

Imperfect speech may be caused by just physical immaturity until a child is about six years old I understand, though at about five it is advisable to have any speech difficulty checked by a speech therapist who will be able to advise you if anything should be done.

It is easier to hear differences in sounds than say them.

We had an interesting demonstration of this when our two nineteen months old grandchildren were drawing pictures with texta pens in our caravan. (Jemma had problems saying "I's and Sam "r's".)

Jemma says "Sam give me the bwew one " Sam, somewhat superior says " Blue one". Grandad being somewhat mischievous says "Give me the gween one Sam". Sam somewhat offended says emphatically "Gwandad it's not gween it's gween!"

The desire to read

If you have a child who wants to learn to read it will be a breeze.

I believe probably the single most relevant thing in developing a desire to read is whether your child sees you and other members of the family reading and enjoying it. If you value reading then he will also.

However it is important that he can enjoy the fun that books can provide before he is asked to learn to read himself.

Start early

I believe that this can start as early as six months. As I have said elsewhere there are good card books with clear pictures of familiar objects that can be chewed as well as examined. But by about fifteen months I believe a child can be shown that books are fun to read on mum or dad's knee. He can point to the duck and say "Quack quack, quack, quack!" or to the train and make lovely tooting sounds, he can recognize his favourite animal and read it over and over and over again, and he can learn not to tear it.

By the time he is two he can enjoy simple books about himself or similar children.

My long term favourite is Lois Lenski's "Davy and his dog". (I managed to get a second hand copy on the internet.) But there are modern equivalents. In this very simple story Davy's dog hides in various places and then is found again, several times. In the illustrations the dog is hidden too, but just enough of him is showing for an observant two year old to find him and yell with glee - over and over again!

How early?

Sam(first grandson) was interested very early - about six months - and when he first could crawl - about nine months - he would crawl over to the box of his books, throw those on the floor he did not want, haul out his favorite, (a book with lift up and movable parts), and crawl over with it for me to read it to him. But Jack at that age was not nearly as interested - not until about twelve months.

What books should you choose for your baby?

Be very careful when choosing books for your baby as so many of them are designed to catch the adult's attention rather than a baby. For very first books a photo book is best.

Remember that a baby is still learning to discriminate between real objects, and an artist's impression of an object presents another layer of discrimination to the child. So at first photos are better than drawings. Your very first aim is to teach your child that real objects can be represented by pictures on paper - nearly as difficult a concept as teaching that a written word represents an real object.

Find books with objects that he is familiar with - and then in my experience ones that make a good noise - "cock -a doodle-do"" ,tooooot" "baaaa" ":grrrr". Your baby will flick over to those pages and want to stay there.

First real story

An excellent story for a two year old is Dr Suess's "A fish out of water" It has a lovely simple story, real suspense and is suitable for the first real story - in comparison to a book of pictures with no plot. Sam absolutely loved it. In the early days you can paraphrase the story a bit, but later every word had to be right!

By the time he is four he is ready for the old favourites - Milly Molly Mandy, A A Milne poetry, even Kipling if you lead up to it, probably anything you love. They will be even partly known by heart if you are patient enough to re-read them as often as your child would like.

Your a child will be quite aware of such things as the reason why you cannot turn over the page until you have read every word, but most importantly that stories are lots of fun.

Mem Fox on "Teaching children how to read before school"

So please I beg you all to read superb books aloud to your children! Begin on the day they are born. I am very serious about this: at least three stories and five nursery rhymes a day, if not more, and not only at bedtime, either. Read with passion and expressive abandonAnd always make it a wild and joyful experience,

And children who have memorized eight nursery rhymes by the age of three, so I am told,are always the best readers by the age of eight.

Writing

“Doing a bit of writing” which follows from lots of drawing and scribbling is also something that a four year old loves - particularly if an older brother or sister is doing lots of important writing at school. When a child tries to copy a word - or his own name, he learns a lot about what makes a written word .

Always have lots of paper and crayons and pens available.

This is a very simple provision that can be made from the earliest age. It can be the back side of computer paper that dad or mum brings home from work or the discarded photocopy paper at the library.

I would also recommend the purchase of a large piece of chalkboard, or you can make one, but good quality chalkboard looked after reasonably well has a long life and is more interesting to use.

We had one in our family room, about 1.2 by .6 for many years and the number of hours drawing and writing on it, could never be counted. I was interested that children of all ages who came into the house made a bee-line for it.

Vocabulary and language extension

Before a child is able to read stories in words and sentence I believe he needs to have reached the stage of speaking clearly in sentences. Many children are speaking in short sentences by two and speaking very fluently by age of three. However others still hesitate to put together a compound sentence when they come to school.

How do you develop clear confident speech in your children? I think the answer is very simple, but not always easy to carry out. I believe all you need to do is to talk to your child a great deal and also so listen to him carefully.

If you are at home with your first child this is easy to talk together about the washing the cooking, the shopping, and your child will surely benefit. However particularly when you have two or more children it is much easier for them to play with the other children; watch television, or play outside. If you really counted the number of sentences that pass between the two of you in any day you might be horribly astonished at how few they are. Are you always too busy on your phone?

If he has an older sibling who always talks for him, or if he just realizes that you are too busy to listen to him he may just talk to his brother or very little at all. But be careful - communication between children is not generally good enough to develop good language in a child. Parent - child language is much more valuable.

What if your child has already developed as uncommunicative? What can you do? (Besides saying he is just like his father!) I found that if you give your child half an hour of your time when you are completely at their service, and you are relaxed, for instance when they are in bed - for them to tell you all of what

happened that day for instance - and you are genuinely interested, and not trying to get away, you can have a great old chat.

Our Jemma had another way to practice her language - she talked all the time to her teddy. She used to wake up early in the morning, and being very good did not get up, but stayed in bed having incredibly long conversations with "Hanni" her much beloved teddy, "She is my child - and you are her great grandma!"

If she has been reprimanded she will go and talk to her teddy for comfort.

Vocabulary and language extension

Reading stories is very important in developing a child's language and vocabulary. When you talk to your small child you generally use only the words that you know they already understand, and there therefore fail to add much new vocabulary. At about three' children soak up an incredible amount of new vocabulary; sometime words you do not really want them to pick up, from when you are talking as adults! When you are reading a story although they may not really understand the new word they pick the meaning up from the context without it needing to be explained and then often try it out in their own language. Even very young children can enjoy really fine literature" although if you look at the vocabulary it is certainly not limited to that suited to a five year old.

Children have words in their vocabulary from all sorts of sources. Lindy from when she was about one used to carry around and take to bed her little comfort blanket with a satin edge - she called it - all in one word "The blanket I prefer!"

If a child's vocabulary is limited it soon places very severe limitations on his reading, as it is very difficult to guess a word you have never met before, and this guessing plays very important part in reading for many years. It important to keep reading to your child even if he can read simple books for himself - to prepare him for the vocabulary of more difficult reading material.

Life experiences

Educationalists also point out how important it is for a child to have a wide range of experiences to help him in understanding and guessing new words when reading about similar experiences.

I would advocate missing school for the trip around Australia, or Europe any day, as a valuable educational experience

Mental age

I was taught at Teacher's College that a mental age of six was necessary for a child to learn to read. But my experience is that even children with learning disabilities can learn the mechanics of reading quite successfully giving them much satisfaction.

I can remember an Inspector visiting my class testing a little down syndrome girl (she was in normal schooling without an aid in those days) She was reading

exceedingly well. She could read all the test questions “Can a fox run fast?” “Is a red flag black?” without a problem (which was all that was needed to score on the test.) But she was quite unable to answer these really simple questions.

Catch him when he is ready

I believe when a child comes to school this motivation and expectation of a both child and parent is at its highest peak, and can be used for rapid and efficient learning. But I also believe that much damage is done if when a child is all geared up to learn to read, his teacher spends months playing around with pre-reading activities which he can already handle easily - or moves far too slowly for a bright child. And here is when a little parent assistance judiciously offered can fill a real gap.

Tests for reading readiness

I would like to give you a couple of words of reassurance about a couple of reading readiness tests teachers give children.

The first of these are tests for physical coordination - the ability to trace along a line, to balance, to hop. When these tests are skillfully interpreted they may give a picture of where special help is needed and maybe indicate problems. It is also true that sometimes motor coordination correlates with learning ability, but certainly not always

Be aware of a teacher saying that because your child cannot hop or something similar, he cannot start to learn to read yet.

I can remember one little girl in my class who could barely hop or catch a ball in her third year at school but was one of the fastest learners in the class, (and is now the Personnel Manager of a very large City Council)

Children have differing coordination skills - *Sam is fantastic at running and jumping, Jemma can cut out pictures with great skill , - both indications of good coordination, but they do not share both of these skills.*

Teachers often use colour naming and discrimination ability as a guide post to reading readiness. it is a valuable discrimination skill to teach your child, but if your son cannot remember and discriminate some colours at five and a half it could easily denote a lack of interest in the task, or colour blindness. He still may be able to discriminate words quite efficiently if he is given the chance.

In fact I would be wary of theories which suggest that a child can learn something in one area and transfer the learning to a different area. It has been shown by psychologists that we do not in fact transfer a great deal from one type of learning to another. That is if you want your child **to be good at reading it is best to concentrate on reading , not some other associated subject.**

Values of reading story books

This chapter on reading readiness is to partially explain why I suggest that you do not stop your regular reading of stories but make it an integral part of the program of teaching your child to read .

He can find that he can himself read some of the picture story books he has so loved you reading to him - such as the Dr Suess Books,. If you have read them half as often as he would like, he will remember much of them to start with.

But I am sure that if you are reading this book you have been reading stories to your child for years. Children can become interested in books from a very early age and this is a necessary basis for learning to read.

Chapter 10 THE IMPORTANCE OF READING

The Universality of reading.

This book is about teaching your child to read English. But if you can read English, you can read any language with the same alphabet if you know the vocabulary.

This was brought home to me when Jemma went to live in France.

When she was six, Jemma went to school in France. She had already learned to read English books in Australia.. She knew very little French and was put into a Grade1 with her peers, who were just starting to learn to read, but as soon as she picked up the French vocabulary, which as a six year old, was quite soon, to the surprise of her teacher, she could read those French books just as well as she did the English ones at home.

The importance of reading.

It is my strong belief that being a keen and efficient reader is the most valuable asset any person can have too enable him to gain an education in all spheres, and also as an area of personal enjoyment that is unsurpassed.

Have you achieved your aim?

When can you feel confident that your child is on the path to achieving this?

I think you have come one important step along the way when you find your son or daughter reading under the doona in torch light after you have insisted on turning off the light!