



# Teaching Your Child to Read

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## **First Steps**

In teaching your child to read at home, a number of things should be kept in mind. First and foremost, it is important to realize that learning to read starts at a very early age. The parent begins the process very naturally by talking to the child. As you talk, you help the child develop a vocabulary. This is one of the biggest correlations with reading success. Those children who have advanced vocabulary will most likely be advanced in reading skills.

The parent can continue the process by developing what is known as phonemic awareness. This is essentially an awareness of the sounds in our language. It can be developed in a number of ways, but reading to your child is the first and most important way. When the child hears the language repeated the sounds become ingrained. In addition, the child makes the connection between language and text as the parent is observed in the act of reading.

## **Ready to Read**

As children get older, their oral language and listening skills should develop to the point where they become ready to begin the

process of real reading. This can occur in some advanced children as early on as age four. It will depend on intelligence level, amount of phonemic awareness, and maturity level. Some children, especially boys, may not be ready until a little later, like ages 5 or 6. If the child is not reading after age 6, there is an indication that there may be some type of reading problem. This may or may not be picked up and identified in school, in either kindergarten or first grade. Sometimes a child will slip by, however. It is important for the parent to be vigilant in this respect so that the small reading problem does not become a large reading problem; one that is not likely to be rectified.

### **Traditional School Reading Programs**

Another area to be aware of is the school's reading program. This may help the student to learn how to read, but can also work in the opposite direction, causing reading problems to begin. Mostly, schools which do not focus on an intensive phonics first program will create more reading problems than they cure.

It has been found that many students are not able to learn to read by the traditional methods most commonly found in elementary schools. This may include:

- a) insufficient stress on the importance of phonics,

- b) ineffective use of phonics in classroom materials, when phonics is employed,
- c) lack of coordination between workbooks and textbooks,
- d) inclusion of too many skills not directly related to the teaching of reading, causing a clouding of understanding among students and their teachers, and
- e) inability of traditional materials to motivate students, due to reliance on old, repetitive teaching procedures.

## **Phonics Instructions**

Parents who home school should be proceeding from phonemic awareness to phonics instruction. These terms are often confused but the latter term merely takes the sounds learned earlier and matches them up with print. That is when the child actually begins to read in the traditional sense. This is where **Reading Sparkers®** comes into play. In this program, students are taught the fundamentals of phonics. In our **Reading Sparkers® Online** version, students are introduced to phonics in word context through a game-like approach which students enjoy. The program covers over one hundred specific phonic skills which, when mastered, allows students to read practically anything, especially words within their own language base. This online

program acts like a personal tutor allowing the students to progress at their own pace.

The more times a skill is repeated, the greater the chance is that the student will both learn and retain that skill. Repetition becomes more acceptable to a student when it is delivered in a motivational manner, i.e. through games, books and activities, etc. Learning takes place with greater facility when it is presented within the context of multiple modalities.

### **Reading Sparkers® Products**

In addition to the web-based program, we also offer correlated materials in printed form. In particular, we publish our **Original Phonic Gameboards** (played with dice and gamepieces), and decodable readers. The phonic games can be played with another student or with the parent or tutor.

The **Motivational Coloring Book/Readers** are special in that they take the same words learned in both the Original and Online gameboards and place them in a meaningful context. This is essential for children to retain phonic knowledge and is a component missing in almost all other phonic materials you generally see on the market. The **Motivational Readers** are written with a phonics-first approach in

mind. That is, each story incorporates specific phonic elements as an integral part of the literature. It is for this reason that we call the readers “decodable texts.”

The **Reading Sparkers® Comprehension Activity Pads** develop a variety of comprehension, word meaning, and study skills, while simultaneously reinforcing decoding skills. The Comprehension Activity Pads are coordinated (unit by unit) with the Online and Original Gameboards and Motivational Coloring Book/Readers to provide a very practical and comprehensive system for teaching the essential of primary level reading

Through out all of our materials, you will notice that the same words are often repeated or are bold faced or highlighted (as in our readers). This has been done to highlight in each child’s mind, the importance of these specific ‘keywords.’ We call these words keywords because learning them is key to mastering the intended skills for a particular unit, and ultimately, to mastering the reading process.

Remember that the key to learning to read at the primary level is to learn phonics. Once children “break the code” they are well on their way to a lifetime of reading enjoyment and learning. Once they have completed the first, second, and third grade phonics program, students can proceed to the next step in the reading process: reading to learn.

At **Reading Sparkers®**, your child's learning to read is our first and only priority. Contact us if you have any questions regarding how to proceed with the program. We want you and your child to be successful!