

Early Reading with Fun Phonics

Shock, horror, you wouldn't dream of teaching a tiny baby! And yet you do. Every waking moment. You teach him to recognise everything in his nursery, home and, as his world widens, his environment. As this powerful bonding between you and your baby grows, so does his knowledge. As you teach, he learns.

"But," you argue, "That's not teaching. That's just being with my baby."

Be assured, it is teaching. It is as valid as the teaching in any Nursery, Playgroup or Pre-School. You are your child's first and finest teacher. You know him better than any teacher ever will and, importantly, he is having one to one tutoring in the safest place on earth.

Now, accepting that you do teach your baby, why do you think it's wrong to teach him or her that 'this a picture is an a' but proactive to say 'this picture is a puppy.' Why is a colourful kite good but a colourful k bad?

Babies are spontaneous learners and this period of brilliant potential is constantly undervalued and lost.

WHY TEACH A BABY?

For forty years I have witnessed the crippling damage wrought by 'Look and Guess' reading methods. For forty years I have gathered one damaged child after another. All were emotionally scarred from having been expected to commit to memory every word in every book they read. New words could only be guessed at. Their reading aloud was hesitant and meaningless, while silent reading was like trying to decipher a foreign language. By age 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and onward they constantly bombed out at comprehension of any text, no matter how simple. These children had no effective catalyst to turn a hotch-potch of letters and words into meaningful information.

Ridiculed daily by peer groups - and might I say frequently by teachers - they are marked as remedial. At best they drift into dead end jobs, forever intimidated and fearing rejection. At worst, though never overcoming their inhibitions, they develop a truculent resilience to authority and end up before the Courts. These were not dumb, stupid or slow children, they were all bright but those vital early years were never harnessed - they were never taught to read and so never developed the skills of thinking, comprehension or critical analysis. Every 'slow' child I have rescued has turned out to be a very bright child who had been living in a totally incomprehensible world.

HOW DOES THIS AFFECT YOUR CHILD?

In spite of the fact that our children in the UK start school earlier than in any other country in Europe and are tested ad nauseam a huge percentage cannot read or can read only haltingly. Whilst denying the blatant evidence that standards have been dumbed down, our Government has, at last, recognized the cause of the UK's literacy problems and has recommended the teaching of phonics. Sadly it is a watered down middle-of-the-road system called 'analytic phonics' where phonic sounds are learned but the same old damaging guesswork texts are still used.

Still, as a specialist in phonics I applaud the fact that children are at least learning that words are made up of sounds, a small step in the right direction.

There are, however, many teachers and Heads of Schools who refuse to embrace the phonic system. In the face of all the evidence to prove that phonics - the system by which I was taught and by which my 96 year old mother was taught - is the only successful way to teach all children to read. 'Look and Guess' is easy and, though it fails a chunk of the population, it's fast and simple and that is why these people refuse to switch.

And here is where your baby takes centre stage.

Just one teacher who encourages him or her to guess at words, whether by searching the picture for clues, by memorising it from another lesson or contextually, ie fitting a suitable word into the sentence, will do years of damage to your child and its future.

By age 14 he will read 'biblical' for 'biographical' 'lands' for 'lends' 'banker' for 'embankment'. To escape this damage you can start in your baby's nursery.

Place the letters of the alphabet around the nursery and then bid a cheery "good morning" to 'a' or 'b' on the walls or 'c' on the floor or 'd' sitting on teddy's nose. This tiny beginning is the start of your child becoming a super reader.

Synthetic phonics, which I have taught continuously since Training College in New Zealand in the fifties, is simply fast phonics to fabulous reading. Babies and pre-schoolers can have a painless path to early literacy with fun and laughter.

For those who have decided on home schooling, your child's successful reading is vital to achieving an excellent standard in every subject. Children don't come with operating instructions, parenting, though wonderful is a course with many obstacles. Your child's reading need not be one of them.

MY NEXT ARTICLE

Commercial alphabets have for many years been the subject of huge controversy between me and shopkeepers. I have approached them in Australia, New Zealand and here in the UK over disastrous alphabet charts. I have found 'w for whale', 'i for ice-cream', 'x for x-ray', 'x for xylophone' and 'c for city' to mention just a few. All wrong and totally detrimental to the new reader.

In my next article I shall give you the perfect alphabet which leads your child straight into reading.

MY TOP ADVICE

Never push your child, play games that will have him laughing and learning at the same time

Source: <http://www.articlecircle.com>

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