

READING READINESS FOR BEGINNERS

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The success of a reading program depends to a great extent upon the kind of preparation children have before the formal reading activity begins. Indeed most of the undesirable habits in Reading are traceable to the inadequacy of the pre-reading period. Due to the haste with which children are made to read, they oftentimes find it difficult to form correct associations with the printed symbols, and failing in this, they find the task of reading repugnant instead of being pleasurable. Wrong attitudes are thus formed and unless these attitudes are corrected, the task of teaching Reading is difficult indeed.

Now the question is, when is a child ready to read? When can we safely begin formal reading from the printed page and how? The very first thing that a child needs when he enters school is adjustment. The child, finding himself with strange people and in strange surroundings, needs a certain length of time to make himself acquainted with those around him and to familiarize himself with the school routine. Unless the child is emotionally adjusted, that is, unless he finds happiness in the company of his classmates, accepts the new order of things, or happily identifies himself with his group, he is not ready to learn anything. Self-confidence arises from a state of happy adjustment, from the realization of the ease and pleasurable-ness of doing things.

How can this happy adjustment be made? Adjustment is personal adaptation. It arises from a personal feeling and acceptance of the nature and state of things as well as a personal

effort to change one's self to conform with them. And this process may be done through varied activities which are wholesome and pleasurable. Among such activities may be mentioned the following:

1. Games, songs and dances.
2. Group activities.
3. Manipulative activities.
4. Field trips.
5. Home visits.

Little children are intensely curious and singularly receptive to rhythmic sounds and movements. For this reason, activities should be replete with action and should provide an outlet for their curiosity. In other words children should have plenty of enjoyable experiences — experiences that make them crave for more, experiences that make them feel secure, that lead them to independence and responsibility.

The second problem that confronts a teacher in Reading for beginners, is the building of children's hearing and speaking vocabulary. At the same time that the children are making themselves emotionally adjusted, they invariably learn to talk and chatter as children only could. They also learn to say originally a thing or two, to repeat jingles and rhymes, to tell simple stories, and to converse among themselves. It is this speaking and hearing experience that is the very groundwork for future reading activities. In fact, the extent to which pupils can tell the names of things or recognize and express their ideas in words more or less indicates the degree or extent to which they are ready to see them in printed form.

For this reason, before any formal reading activity is done, the children must have a vocabulary wide enough. Such vocabulary maybe built through:

1. **Supervised free cooperative play activities.** Action or doing words best taught through such activities.
2. **Picture Study.** Descriptive words such as "pretty", "beautiful"; color such as "red", "blue", "yellow"; size such as "big", "small", "little", etc., can be illustrated through pictures, cut outs, posters, etc.
3. **Collecting things such as leaves, flowers, stones, shells, pictures, insects, etc.** Names of things are best taught through visual associations with real objects.
4. **Music, poems, rimes, and jingles.** Words that sound alike have a particularly rich appeal to small children.
5. **Riddles, puzzles, etc.** Simple riddles and guessing games are good means for satisfying children's curiosity.
6. **Books, pictures, and magazines.** Books rich in pictures are not only a source of much enjoyment but also are vital factors that awaken children's interest in them.

Aside from the building of their speaking and hearing vocabulary, children should be able to acquire the following abilities:

1. **Visual abilities** — Children should be able to:
 - a. Identify pictures, colors, and objects.
 - b. Find specific objects in pictures.
 - c. See likeness or differences in

- objects, pictures, and words.
- d. Follow sequential pictures arranged from left to right.
- e. Follow the lines on a chart.
2. **Auditory abilities** — They should be able to:
 - a. Identify words with like beginning and ending.
 - b. Make simple rhymes and jingles.
 - c. Clap their hands with music or with words in rhyme.
 - d. Listen to recurring notes or sounds.
3. **Motor abilities**—They should be able to:
 - a. Run, climb, skip, hop, or jump.
 - b. Clap with rhythm using a rhythmic band or instrument.
 - c. Handle blocks, bounce balls, hammer nails, etc.
 - d. Draw, trace, or color something.
 - e. Cut, tear, or paste pictures.

Now we shall try to answer the questions we asked somewhere in the beginning of this article. When is a child ready to read? What are the evidences that children are ready to begin reading? Although the readiness with which children become ready to read depends upon many factors, the following paragraphs freely quoted from the "Resourceful Teacher"³ may indicate when one is ready to read:

"Teacher observation, school records, formal and informal tests, conference with parents and children, together with reports on physical fitness, reveal the successive stages of development of each child. A normal child sooner or later reaches the stage of wanting to

learn to read. Casual play contacts with printed material are not enough. He wants to read for himself. Some children reach this stage early in the school year, others later. A healthy six-year old child is usually ready to read if he:

- a. Has normal sight and hearing.
- b. Has background of experience which enables him to interpret situations found in pictures.
- c. Understand the words he will meet in his first reading.
- d. Pronounces these words with reasonable accuracy.
- e. Enjoys and interprets simple pictures.
- f. Understands and follows simple directions.
- g. Recognizes the function of printed symbols.
- h. Recognizes colors by name.
- i. Shows reasonable auditory and visual discrimination.
- j. Can remember and recount

experiences in sequence.

- k. Can express ideas in complete sentences.
- l. Has strong interest in many things.
- m. Accepts changing conditions without showing strain.
- n. Participates constructively in group activity.
- o. Has a growing fund of ideas.
- p. Enjoys looking at books and handling them.

From the above discussions, we gather that Reading readiness involves the emotional, social, and physical development of children. It is a period of preparation wherein children are helped to get their proper adjustment—a period wherein attitudes, habits, and skills are learned as a basis for the participation of vicarious experiences.

¹The Resourceful Teacher, September 1947, Vol II, No. 1, pp 1-4.

²Ibid

³Ibid

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