

Key Principles of Teaching Children How to Teach Themselves to Read

- Children in large part teach themselves to read from the instruction and activities we provide them. They learn how to figure out things on their own, like unfamiliar phonograms and new spelling patterns.
- The application of the alphabetic principle to identify letters and words is the basis of all the activities in this method and it is how the child will teach himself to read.
- Effective early reading instruction is based on activities that guide the student from speech to print, from sound to symbol and which move from the *concrete* to the *abstract*.
- Teach the alphabetic principle before you teach the alphabet.
- The foundation of alphabet mastery is beginning sound isolation.
- *Letter knowledge* is best learned by the child through his application of the alphabetic principle using self-guided materials to match beginning sounds to printed letters.
- The foundation of reading and spelling *words* is phoneme segmentation, the most important beginning reading skill. Struggling readers often lack this ability to separate spoken words into individual sounds.
- Decoding skills are best learned by the child through his application of the alphabetic principle using self-guided materials to match sounds of spoken words to letters in printed words.
- The organization of materials in the environment is crucial in implementing effective early reading instruction. The various games and activities for each skill level are grouped together in an attractive manner and made easily accessible to students. This helps to structure the learning environment so that students understand which games they may freely choose to work with.
- Freedom to choose is key to gradually shifting responsibility for learning to the student.
- Freedom to choose individualizes the learning experience for the student, according to his strengths and interests.
- Teaching is not testing. Don't ask a student a question unless you are sure he knows the answer! If the child gives a wrong answer, you've asked the wrong question. If you give him a choice of answers, he will usually choose the right one.
- Repetition is the teacher's best teaching tool and the quickest, most direct way for a student to master skills and information. Repetition is the healing balm of education.
- Emphasis must shift from a traditional model of memorization through drill, to a deeper, more permanent learning through self-guided hands-on activities.

Never do for the child what he can do for himself.

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