

Teach Your Child

to Read in 100

Easy Lessons

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In 1955 Rudolph Flesch rocked the educational community with his book *Why Johnny Can't Read*. The theme of the book was that phonics methods are more effective than the look-say methods used in schools, but phonics methods are not used in schools. Twenty-five years later, Flesch's follow-up book came out—*Why Johnny Still Can't Read*. The title says it all. Although words and epithets flew during those years, very little changed. According to Flesch, the look-say, or whole-word, method is still being used in three out of four schools.

The bad news is further explained by Robert Benjamin in his book *Making Schools Work*. Benjamin, a newspaper reporter commissioned by the Ford Foundation to identify educational programs that work, says, "Teaching children to read well from the start is the most important task of elementary schools. But relying on education to approach this correctly can be a great mistake. Many schools continue to employ instructional methods that have been proven ineffective. The staying power of the look-say or whole-word method of teaching beginning reading is perhaps the most flagrant example of this failure to instruct effectively."¹

So much for the bad news. The first part of the good news is that there is a program that works. This program—**Distar**, published by Science Research Associates, Inc. (SRA)—involves no snappy motivational tricks and no instructional magic. It is simply a very, very careful program, and research consistently shows that **Distar** does the best job of all commercial programs in teaching reading. Benjamin writes:

The program bears almost nothing in common with the way students are taught in most of America's public schools. But DISTAR works. It consistently has delivered what other programs usually just promise. . . . In the largest, most expensive, most ambitious social experiment ever conducted in the United States—in which nine different instructional programs representing the major educational theories of the 1970's were pitted against each other to find out what works best with low-income children—DISTAR far and away came out on top.²

Research on DISTAR shows it has had dramatic effects with almost every kind of child. . . . DISTAR is particularly effective with young children.³

The second part of the good news is that the hundred-day program presented in this book is an adaptation of the **Distar** Fast Cycle Reading Program. The program has been streamlined somewhat and modified for home use. If you follow the program, you will teach your child to read quite well in one hundred days.

¹Robert Benjamin, *Making Schools Work* (New York: Continuum, 1981), pp. 94–96.

²Benjamin, *Making Schools Work*, p. 71.

³Benjamin, *Making Schools Work*, p. 79.

The hundred-day program is appropriate for preschool children (bright three-and-a-half-year-olds, average four- and five-year-olds).

The hundred-day program is also appropriate for children who have been in school but who have not learned to read.

The program is *not* recommended for “poor readers” who have been taught how to read but who make frequent mistakes.

The only materials that you’ll need to teach reading are this book and some paper (or a chalkboard)—no flash cards, lesson plans, special books, or machines.

The instructions for each lesson are complete, telling you exactly what to say and do. Each lesson is designed so that it takes only about half an hour each day. That time includes all preparation time and the time that you spend presenting the lesson to your child.

After you complete the program, you’ll know more about teaching reading than most public-school teachers, because you will have carefully observed and participated in the step-by-step development of your child’s reading skills. And because the program works, something very nice happens: perhaps not on the first lesson or on the fifth, but long before Lesson 100 your child will turn on to reading. The child’s surroundings are full of written words that the child will read with great pride. Your life will be enriched as you watch your child grow in a wonderful way.

THE COMPLEX SKILL OF READING

The sophisticated reading that adults do is analogous to playing a concerto on the piano. The ultimate goal of reading instruction is to prepare children for the concerto of reading—reading complicated material silently, at a reasonably fast rate, and understanding the details of the message the author presents.

The program that prepares the child should be a careful one, just as good instruction in playing the piano starts with simple skills that are modified and expanded to create more complicated ones. A piano-playing program is poor if it requires the naive student to play a concerto. The student will not be able to perform and will understandably become frustrated. A more reasonable program would build toward the concerto one step at a time, designed so that the student achieves mastery of each step before moving to a more difficult one.

So it is with reading instruction. A reasonable program begins *at the beginning* and builds. The skills that are needed for more complicated tasks are first taught in their simplest form. Once the child has mastered these skills, the program presents more complicated variations.

The following are the four most important points about *an effective sequence for teaching reading*:

1. The beginning exercises are simple and do not resemble later exercises (just as beginning piano exercises do not look much like advanced ones).
2. The program provides teaching for every single skill that the child is expected to use when performing even the simplest reading exercises.
3. The exercises change form slowly, and the changes are relatively small, so that the exercises are always relatively easy for the child.
4. At every step, the program provides for very clear and unambiguous communications with the child.

THE DISTAR® READING PROGRAM

The major force that has determined the design and content of the **Distar** program is feedback about specific, detailed problems that children experience. When **Distar** was developed, the authors assumed that if students had problems with any of the exercises presented, the program—not the students—was at fault. So the program was changed, and tried out with new students, and changed again until it was smooth and manageable. In its final form it has the potential to teach virtually any child who goes through it. Note that it has only the *potential*. For this potential to be realized, the “teacher” must present the various exercises as specified and must make sure that the child is able to perform every task presented in each lesson.

Research Involving Distar

Distar has been involved in more than a dozen comparative studies. The results are fairly uniform: children taught with **Distar** outperform their peers who receive instruction in other programs. These results hold after one year of instruction, after two, after three, and after four. The largest single study in which **Distar** was involved was the comparison of U.S. Office of Education Follow Through sites—the largest educational experiment ever conducted. Various geographic sites in the United States selected a specific educational program from those made available. Each site agreed to implement the chosen program for teaching poverty children in kindergarten through grade three. The University of Oregon Follow Through model, which used **Distar** instruction in all grades and for all major subjects (reading, language, math), consistently outperformed all the other sponsored programs in reading achievement, arithmetic achievement, language performance, and measures of self-esteem. The more than ten thousand children in the University of Oregon model

came from various cities and counties in the United States—some from Indian reservations; others from poverty neighborhoods in cities like New York and Washington, D.C.; still others from rural places like DeKalb County, Tennessee, and Williamsburg County, South Carolina. The **Distar** programs worked better than any other program in the cities, better in rural areas, better with whites, with blacks, and with brown, better with poverty children and with middle-class children.

The **Distar** programs are more effective than other programs because they control more of the details that are important to successful teaching. Some beginning reading programs control the reading vocabulary that is presented to the child. **Distar** goes far beyond this. It controls vocabulary, the specific tasks that are presented, the type of example, the number of times the example appears, and even the teacher's wording—including specifications about how to effectively correct different types of errors that may occur. The control involves all the details that might make a difference in how the child receives the communication. Some things that **Distar** controls may seem quite reasonable and necessary to a person not familiar with educational practices, (for instance, the control of how to correct the child's mistakes.) Yet the "basal reading" programs that are most widely used in schools do not provide teachers with this type of information. We analyzed the four most widely used basal reading programs in grades four through six and discovered that none of them contains any specific correction procedures. The teacher's guides simply provide general suggestions cautioning the teacher to work longer with the children who learn more slowly than others.

COMMUNICATING CLEARLY WITH THE CHILD

Traditional reading programs are poor devices for teaching *all* children because they do not have provisions for communicating clearly. To appreciate the pitfalls that are involved in clear communication, we have to put ourselves in the place of the child who is trying to learn to read. This child may not understand exactly what reading is or precisely how one goes about doing it. Adults may have a clear idea of what they are trying to tell the child, but things may look quite

different from the child's perspective. Let's say that we teach the child to look at the first letter of words and identify those words (an activity common in poor reading programs). We might begin by presenting words that are easy to distinguish by looking at the first letter. Here's a possible list of such words:

he go fat run with

Although the naive child might quickly "read" those words by looking at the first letter, the child may later encounter a serious problem. As soon as we introduce a new word that begins with the same letter that one of those first words begins with, we will probably discover that the child confuses the new word with the familiar word. For example, when we introduce the word **him**, we will probably discover that the child calls the word **he**, because both words begin with **h**.

This example points out a very important feature of poor communication in a teaching sequence. *The problem that the communication creates is not evident at the time the teaching occurs.* The child in the example reads the initial set of words without a hitch. Everything seems to be fine. Only later, when we introduce examples that call for more difficult discriminations, does the problem emerge.

If we examine the communication involved in early instruction, we can identify the kind of confusion that it may create and predict the kind of problem the child may later encounter. One of the more popular (but less effective) techniques for teaching initial reading skills is called the language experience method. This method involves doing something with the children, then talking about the experience, then writing sentences on the board that tell about the experience, then pointing to the words in the sentences and showing the children how to "read" them. The most obvious problem with the method is that it is far easier for the children to *remember* the sentences than it is for them to identify the individual words. Remember, these children do not know anything about reading. The teacher stands up, makes some squiggles on the board, points to them, and talks slowly. While pointing to the different squiggles, the teacher then requires the children to repeat what was said. Although it is possible for some children to extract the intended meaning from this communication,

the communication is very poor. Some children predictably come away from it with the idea that when you read, you simply point to the squiggles and talk slowly as you recite one of the familiar sentences. If we were to put up one of the charts the children worked on earlier without first cueing them about the content, some children would point to the words in order and say sentences for *another chart* with great fidelity.

Another communication problem occurs if we try to teach too much during the initial reading exercises. This problem is characteristic of most of the basal reading programs that are used in schools. These programs are extremely poor at communicating the difference between decoding and understanding. Decoding is the simple act of identifying the words in a sentence. Decoding does not necessarily imply understanding. To decode the sentence **Ruf unter glop splee**, you simply say the words. This illustration points out that you may be able to decode without understanding what the sentence means. Traditional reading programs typically confuse the beginning reader about whether the teacher is trying to teach decoding or understanding. These programs typically begin with the teacher discussing details of a picture. If the picture shows a girl named Jan, the teacher talks about Jan—what she is wearing, the color of her hair, and so forth. After discussing Jan, the teacher points to the word below the picture. The word, of course, is **Jan**.

It might seem that this communication is effective because it promotes interest and gives the children the motivation for both reading and understanding the written message. However, this communication may prompt the child to formulate a serious misconception about how to read. If the teacher always talks about the picture before reading the word, and if the word is always predictable by referring to the picture, the child may reasonably assume that:

- You read words by referring to a picture.
- You must understand the word that is to be decoded before you can read it.

Unfortunately, most children who fail to learn to read in school learn either one or a combination of these misconceptions. The typical poor reader in the upper elementary grades, for instance, reads some words by saying a *synonym* that bears no resemblance to the word on the page. The word may be **fine** and the reader calls it **good**. Consider the machinations that must occur in the reader's confused mind for this type

of mistake to occur. The reader must approach the task of decoding with the idea that before reading a word, you must understand that word. The child looks at the word and seems to understand it, but when the child tries to say the word, a synonym comes out. (After all, the synonym and the word have the same meaning.)

A careless teaching communication permits the child to succeed for the moment, only to experience a serious setback later. To avoid these pitfalls, we must use a program that proceeds very carefully, tiptoeing around the pitfalls without taking costly shortcuts. The communications make it very clear when the child is simply to figure out the word and when the child is supposed to attend to the meaning. The communication arranges the order of these events so that the child *first* decodes, *then* discovers the meaning. The communication further shows the child a workable set of procedures for decoding or figuring out the word. At first this procedure is directed, a step at a time. As the child becomes adept at linking the steps, the directions shrink and the child assumes increasing responsibility.

Decoding—is the central skill in initial reading. Most of the other skills are nothing more than language skills. Once a sentence has been decoded, it is like a spoken sentence that may have been presented slowly. If the child has the language skills necessary to understand the spoken sentence, the child has the skills necessary to *understand* the decoded sentence. The central issue is not that of teaching the child to understand, but of teaching the child how to decode the sentences that *are to be understood*. (We should not require the child to read sentences that are beyond the child's understanding, any more than we would require somebody to read a Spanish text if the person had no understanding of Spanish. But if we have met this obvious language requirement, the central thrust of initial reading becomes the emphasis on decoding.)

MAKING TEACHING EASIER

Just as some of the control measures used in **Distar** may seem reasonable, others may initially seem contrainuitive or simply unnatural. An example of this control is the script that the teacher is to present verbatim when teaching

the lessons. A typical response to the scripted presentations is “Why would a program have to choreograph what the teacher says?” The answer becomes apparent only if you observe teachers trying to teach without carefully controlled scripts, particularly when the presentation is delicate (which is the case when trying to teach a naive five-year-old to read). We know about these problems because before designing **Distar** we ran a master’s training program at the University of Illinois. We provided our interns with detailed instruction in how to present tasks to children—the rate at which to pace them, procedures for stressing different words, and procedures for reinforcing and correcting the children. Unless you are a teacher who has had a great deal of training, the amount of information that you must attend to when carrying out an effective presentation of this type to a group of eight fidgety five-year-olds is overwhelming. If you add the requirement that the teacher must also supply the wording for each example that is presented, the overwhelming becomes impossible. Typically, the interns attended either to the content they presented or to the behavior of the children they were trying to teach. When they attended to the behavior, they frequently became verbose, repetitive, and often bumbled. When they talked too much (which they frequently did), their delivery suffered because their pacing became poor. The children became confused and lost interest. The solution was to remove some of the variables from the teacher by scripting what the teacher was to say. The teacher was left with plenty to do because the material still had to be presented in a way that was both effective and dynamic. But the teacher could now concentrate primarily on delivering the content, not on trying to create it or design ways to “get it across.” After all, sitting in front of a group of children, each of whom may produce an incredible variety of responses at any moment, is not the best place to create smooth presentations.

Effective communication is the sum of many *details*. Unless all these details are controlled, the child will receive poor communication from the teacher, and the teacher will receive poor information about the child. The naive child fails to perform very well unless all details are carefully controlled. The information that the teacher receives is that the child cannot perform and therefore must be slow, must have some sort of visual perception problem or emotional prob-

lem. This information is categorically wrong. Each author of this book has worked with thousands of children, from gifted to “severely retarded.” The authors have never seen a child four years old or older with an IQ above 70 who could not be taught to read, and read well, within a reasonable period of time. We have seen hundreds of children who have not been taught to read in school. We have worked with children at preschool to college levels who could not read and whose parents probably believed in the finality of the labels with which the school had adorned these students: dyslexic, perceptually handicapped, learning-disabled. These labels are nonsense. Almost without exception, the “disabled” students that we have worked with had two obvious problems. The first was that they had not been taught properly. Their confusion suggested that the malfunctions existed in the teachers’ techniques, not in the children’s minds. The second problem was that these students seemed to *believe* the labels. They hated reading (or trying to read). But the cure for these problems did not involve neurosurgery or wonder drugs. It involved nothing more than starting over and teaching carefully. The children soon discovered that they could learn, that their progress impressed their teacher, and that reading (or learning) was not so bad after all. A child’s self-image goes through a remarkable growth spurt when the child receives powerful demonstrations of success.

Distar ORTHOGRAPHY: WHY THE “FUNNY” PRINT?

Orthography is a fancy word that refers to the letters that make up words, or how words are spelled. One problem with reading from the kind of orthography that occurs in everyday reading is that the spelling is sometimes outrageous. The word **said** is not spelled the way it sounds: “sed.” Many of the simplest words that we would use to make up even the simplest sentence are also irregular—**the, off, of, what, to, do, where, who** . . . An interesting exercise for beginning reading teachers is to try to make up simple sentences in which the orthographic code is perfectly regular. For it to be perfectly regular, each letter would make exactly the same sound each time it appeared in the sentence. **Pam had ham** is a perfectly regular sentence. The letter **m** oc-

curs twice, but it makes the same sound each time it occurs: “m.” The letter **a** occurs in all words. Each time it occurs, it makes the same short-vowel sound. Although it is possible to use conventional symbols and conventional spelling to make up sentences in which all words have a regular spelling, as soon as we move from Pam and her ham, the task becomes much more difficult. If we try to express the idea that a girl and a boy went to a lake, we may encounter a great deal of difficulty in creating sentences in which all the letters make one and only one sound. Consider the sentence **He and she go to the lake**. The letter **e** has the same function in the words **he** and **she**. In the words **the** and **lake**, however, the letter takes on two different roles. First it makes an “uh” sound (in **the**), and then it becomes silent (in **lake**). The letter **o** has different sound roles in the word **go** and the word **to**. The letter **h** takes on some bizarre roles. First it makes the common “h” sound (in the word **he**). Then it becomes combined with **s** to make the “sh” sound (in the word **she**). Then it combines with **t** for the **th** sound (in the word **the**).

English, clearly, is not a regularly spelled language. It is an amalgam of contributions from Latin, Greek, and French. But there are ways to simplify it for the beginning reader.

Distar solves the problem by introducing an altered orthography. This orthography does two things. It presents variations of some symbols so that we can create a larger number of words that are spelled regularly (each symbol having only a single sound function). At the same time, the orthography permits us to spell words the way they are spelled in traditional orthography. Here is the **Distar** alphabet:

a ā b c ch d e ē f g h i I I j k l m n

o ō oo p qu r s sh t th u ū v w wh x y ȳ z

Notice that there are two variations for the letter **a** and for the letter **e**. By using these letters we can make the words **he** and **went** regular. The word **he** is presented as **hē** and the word **went** as **went**. Now both words are clearly the sum of their letters. Stated differently: if you say the sound value for each letter, you will say the word.

The orthography also provides joined letters. We can use these to make the word **she** regular: **shē**. The clue that **s** and **h** are joined is very important to the beginning reader. We can also make the word **the** sort of regular: **thē**. (We do not normally pronounce the word that way, unless we are making a speech or trying to be super-proper; however, the beginning of the word is now regular.)

One more convention in **Distar** orthography that permits us to spell words correctly and yet make them regular involves *small letters*. The rule about small letters is this: you don't say them. Silent letters are presented in small type. With the small letters we can now make the word **lake** regular: **lāke**. You do not read the final **e**, but the letter is present and the word is spelled as it should be: **l-a-k-e**.

Here's the entire sentence about **he** and **she**, with all the **Distar** conventions:

hē and shē went to the lāke.

Everything is now regular (one symbol making one and only one sound) except for the word **the** and the word **to**. Your first impulse might be to think, “Isn't that a shame,” and then start trying to figure out ways to make these words perfectly regular. Hold the impulse. When we first began working with the modified alphabet, we used one that was completely regular. We discovered that when we attempted to provide a transition to traditional orthography, some children had a lot of trouble. Their trouble was created by our poor communication. By making the code completely regular, we had implied that reading involves nothing more than looking at the sounds for each word and adding them up. We failed to alert them to the fact that some words are different and that a different strategy is needed to approach these words. Later, we discovered that when we introduced some irregularly spelled words early in the program, the transition was much easier because we had provided practice in dealing with the kind of strategy needed for irregularly spelled words like **to**, **was**, and **said**.

But **Distar** orthography permits us to do a lot of nice things. We can make potentially difficult words like **where** and **were** perfectly regular: (**wher_e** **wer_e**)

Notice that the word **were** has the joined **er**, which makes the sound “ur.” The **e** is silent, so if you say the sounds for **w** and **er**, you will say **were**. **Where** is also regular now. It has the short **e** (as in **end**). By saying the sounds for **wh**, **e**, and **r**, you will say **where**.

The alphabet does not provide for all possible sounds. The goal in using this alphabet is not to replace traditional orthography but rather to create a variation of it that facilitates initial instruction. Once the child has learned to read words written in this modified orthography, we make the transition to traditional orthography. **Distar** orthography does not have to be exhaustive (presenting symbols for every sound) because we do not have to teach all words or all sound combinations at the beginning of reading instruction. We can teach many skills after we have made the transition to traditional orthography. By then the child has many reading skills, which means that the communications do not have to be as careful as those for the initial skills. The most careful part of the program must be the first part, because it develops the most basic skills that are later expanded and made more precise. If poor communications occur in the first part, the later parts cannot build successfully on skills that had been taught. These parts may then have to include the unpleasant job of re-teaching the basics.

TEACHING FIRST THINGS FIRST

A good reading program should introduce actual reading as soon as possible. But before the child is able to perform the simple act of decoding words such as **mat** and **if**, the child must have some important prereading skills. We can figure out what most of those skills are by determining what a child would have to do to read a simple, regularly spelled word like **mat**.

The most obvious skill the child needs is knowledge of the sounds that each letter makes. This fact suggests some preteaching in sound identification. **Distar** does not initially teach letter names, because letter names play no direct role in reading words. The simplest way to demonstrate this fact is to say the letter names “em,” “ay,” and “tee” very fast and see if they

add up to the word **mat**. They do not. They generate something like “emmaytee.” It may not be a dirty word, but it certainly is not **mat**.

Sounds are functional in reading. So we pre-teach the sounds before we present them in words. Before reading the word **mat** and other words composed of these letters, the child would learn to identify **m** as “mmm.” The repeated letters do not mean that you say the sound again and again. They signal you to hold the sound. Take a deep breath and say “mmmmmm” for a couple of seconds.

Not all sounds can be held for a long time. The sounds that can be held are called continuous sounds. They include **f**, **s**, **n**, **l**, **z**, **w**, and all the vowels. The sounds that cannot be held are noncontinuous. This group includes **b**, **d**, **ch**, **g**, **h**, **p**, **j**, and **t**. To say these sounds, you pronounce them very fast and add no “uh” sound to the end of them. The sound at the end of the word **mat** is unvoiced, which means that it is whispered. It is not “tuh.” It is a whispered little “t.” That is how it occurs in the word, and that is how it is pretaught. When the child has mastered the sounds that will occur in various words, the child has mastered the most obvious skill that is needed to read.

But other skills are quite important. Blending skills are verbal, not visual, skills. A child who does not have them will have difficulty linking the sounds of a word. To teach the blending skills called for by the word **mat**, we get rid of the written word **mat** but require the verbal behavior that the child would use in reading that word. First the child says the word very slowly, holding each sound but not stopping between the sounds: “mmmaaah.” Next the child says it fast: “mat.”

Here’s how we might present the task:

“Say **mmmaaah**.” (Child says:) “mmmaaah.”

“Say it fast.” (Child says:) “mat.”

For the blending task, the teacher does not stop between the sounds. (Learning this skill is sometimes difficult for children; however, it is usually much more difficult for teachers.) The reason for presenting the sounding out without stopping between the sounds is that it creates a much cleaner communication than one created by stopping between the sounds: “mmm—aaa—t.” When the child says the sounds without pausing, the child is actually saying the word slowly. To say the word at a regular speaking rate, the child simply speeds up the word. The

child does not first have to put the parts together and then say it fast.

When we add the written word to the blending exercise, we have an initial word-reading exercise.

You point to the word **mat** and touch under the letters **m**, **a**, and **t** as the child says “mmmaaat.”

You say, “Say it fast.” Child says, “mat.”

We’ve identified two important skills that are called for by the simple word-reading task. There are others, the most important of which is rhyming. Rhyming points out the relationship of one word to words that are similar. If we start with the ending **op** and add different beginnings (by putting different consonants in front of **op**), we create a series of related words. If the child has basic rhyming skills, the relationship between the words becomes very clear. They rhyme. This understanding promotes important generalizations about word families (which are based on common endings). This understanding helps the child see that a word like **hop** is not an island but is part of a network of words that includes **top**, **pop**, and **drop**.

To summarize, you are going to teach your child the sounds the different letters make. You do not teach the letters all at once. You present them one at a time and give your child plenty of practice with each new letter. While you are teaching the letters, you also work on blending skills. The child practices saying a variety of simple words slowly and then saying each word fast. Also, you work on rhyming and other skills related to the task of sequencing the different sound parts of words. During the initial lessons, your child will work on these skills, not on reading words. After your child has learned the sounds for the letters that will appear in the first words presented in the program, and learned the other necessary skills, you introduce the simplest form of word reading. At this time your child will have practiced all the verbal components called for by the complex task of decoding. Your child will have made rhymes for the words that are to be read and will have blended them. Now simply put the parts together, add the written word, and presto: your child can read.

The sequence is designed so that the child who takes the first steps can take the next step and the steps that follow that step. Furthermore, all the skills that are needed are pretaught, which means that you should always be able to correct

mistakes in more complicated tasks by referring to the specific skills that were pretaught.

Irregulars and Comprehension

Initial decoding is certainly not the end of reading instruction; however, it is the major stumbling block. After you guide the child past the initial decoding, you must still teach a great deal. You must introduce different groups of irregularly spelled words (such as the group that contains **ar**, like **part**, **smart**, **bark**, and so on). And you must switch emphasis from the reading of isolated words to sentence reading and sentence comprehension. To make reading the key to the discovery of meaning, you first direct the child to read a sentence, then answer questions about the sentence. If the sentence the child has just read is **We went home**, you would ask questions such as “What did we do? . . . Who went home?” This type of comprehension is simple, literal understanding, but like initial decoding, it is the simplest and most basic form that can be presented. In addition to the strictly literal questions about the sentences the child reads, you also introduce comprehension activities to promote the idea that the sentences may tell about pictures, and that these pictures show what the sentence tells. If the sentence is **It is on**, you tell your child, “You’re going to see a picture. And what do you know about the thing you’ll see in the picture?” (Child says, “It is on.”) You present the picture showing a child who has just turned on a light. You now ask questions that relate the text to the picture. “What is on?” You also ask questions that serve as rewards.

As your child becomes more proficient at handling the simpler forms of comprehension activities, more elaborate ones are introduced. One type is the prediction question. After the child reads a sentence that tells what somebody wants to do, tries to do, or starts to do, you ask, “What do you think will happen?” The next sentence in the text answers the question. Prediction questions help the child develop the skill of “anticipating” what will happen next. These questions help the reader form a tie between the skills used in listening to a story and those involved in the more active role of reading it.

So your child starts the program with presumably very few reading-related skills. Within one hundred teaching days—about two-thirds of a school year—your child reads, although not as well as an adult. But through the course of the lessons your child has learned to read words without first sounding them out—and therefore has learned to read at a rate much faster than that at which the child read during the first lessons that presented word reading. Your child has learned to read from traditional orthography and now reads simple stories that are more than 250 words long (through a transition that begins in Lesson 74). The child has learned basic sentence-comprehension skills (literal comprehension and prediction skills).

And the program provides for teaching you. As you read the description of the various comprehension skills, you may have wondered, “How will I know which questions to present and when to present them?” It’s easy. All the questions that you are to present are written in the program. All tasks and activities that you are to present are written in the program. In fact, all the correct responses that your child should make for the various tasks are indicated. If you follow the program religiously the first time you present it, the outcome is guaranteed. Your child will read, and you will be an effective reading teacher. When you present the program a second or third time to other children, you will understand where each type of exercise is going. You will be able to free-lance more, add, change, possibly streamline. If you try to become too fancy the first time you present it, however, you will probably find out later in the program that you should not have modified some of the things you did earlier. Our discussion of the program was very general. A host of mini-skills is taught along the way, and unless you know how each of these skills relates to others that are to be taught, you may change an exercise from the way it is specified and in so doing fail to teach one of these skills.

GETTING READY

Before you start teaching your child, you should do four things:

- Learn the sounds that are introduced in the program, particularly the first ten.
- Make up a teaching schedule.
- Practice some corrections.
- Practice presenting the first couple of lessons in the program.

The sounds. The following list presents the sounds in the order of their appearance. Accompanying each sound is a brief description of it, indicating whether it is *continuous* or *noncontinuous* and whether it is *voiced* or *whispered*.

Before you present any sounds in the program, make sure that you can pronounce each sound properly. First make sure that you can produce an individual sound in isolation (apart from a word) in a way that is not distorted. The sound will be distorted if you add a funny sound to the end of it.

The simplest procedure is to start with a word that ends in the sound you are interested in. Say the word slowly and loudly, as you would say it to a person who is hard of hearing. For example, to figure out how to say the sound **nnn** in isolation, say the word **fan** very slowly, holding each sound for at least one second. The way you say the **nnn** sound in that word is the way you would say the sound **nnn** in isolation. Note that you do not say “fffaaannnuh” or “fffaaannnih.” So when you say the **nnn** sound in isolation, you would not say “nnnuh” or “nnnih.” You would say a pure **nnn** with no additional sound tacked onto the end.

To figure out how to say the **t** sound, say the word **fat** slowly and loudly. Note that you cannot hold the **t** sound. It occurs quickly no matter how long you hold the **fff** sound and the **aaa** sound (both of which can be held a long time). Note also that you do not add a funny sound to the end. You do not say “fffaaatuh” or “fffaaatih.” So you would not say “tuh” or “tih” when you present the **t** sound in isolation.

Remember, the simplest procedure for figuring out how to say sounds in isolation is to say a word that ends in that sound. Say the word slowly and loudly, but not in a way that distorts the sounds. The sound that you say at the end of the word is the sound you would produce when presenting that sound in isolation.

A sound is whispered if your voice is not turned on when you say the sound. Place your hand on your throat and *whisper* the entire word **fuss**.

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

Symbol	Pronounced	As in	Voiced or Whispered	Introduced in Lesson	Symbol	Pronounced	As in	Voiced or Whispered	Introduced in Lesson
m	mmm	ra <u>m</u>	v	1	ar	ōrrr	ca <u>r</u>	v	49
s	sss	bu <u>s</u>	w	1	ch	ch	to <u>ch</u>	w	50
a	aaa	an <u>d</u>	v	3	e	ēēē	en <u>d</u> (ed)	v	52
ē	ēēē	ea <u>t</u>	v	5	b	b	gra <u>b</u>	v	54
t	t	ca <u>t</u>	w	7	īng	iīing	si <u>ng</u>	v	56
r	rrr	ba <u>r</u>	v	9	ī	īīī	ic <u>e</u>	v	58
d	d	ma <u>d</u>	v	12	y	yyyē	ya <u>rd</u>	v	60
i	iii	if	v	14	er	urrr	broth <u>er</u>	v	62
th	ththth	this and bathe (not thing)	v	16	oo	oooooo	mo <u>on</u> (not look)	v	65
c	c	tack <u>c</u>	w	19	J	j	jud <u>g</u> e	v	67
o	ooo	ox	v	21	wh	www	wh <u>y</u>	w	69
n	nnn	pan <u>n</u>	v	23	ȳ	īīī	my	v	71
f	fff	stuf <u>f</u>	w	25	ū	ūūū	u <u>s</u> e	v	74
u	uuu	u <u>nd</u> er	v	27	qu	kwww (or koo)	qu <u>i</u> ck	v	74
l	lll	pa <u>l</u>	v	29	x	ksss	ox	w	75
w	www	w <u>o</u> w	v	31	z	zzz	buz <u>z</u>	v	75
g	g	tag	v	33	ea	ēēē	le <u>a</u> ve	v	79
I	(the word I)		v	34	ai	āāā	ra <u>i</u> n	v	88
sh	shshsh	wi <u>sh</u>	w	35	ou	owww	lo <u>u</u> d	v	89
ā	āāā	at <u>e</u>	v	37					
h	h	ha <u>t</u>	w	39					
k	k	tack <u>k</u>	w	41					
ō	ōōō	ov <u>e</u> r	v	43					
v	vvv	lov <u>e</u>	v	45					
p	p	sap	w	48					

18 You should feel no vibration on your throat because all the sounds are whispered.

Now say the word **fuss** very slowly by holding each sound longer than you normally would. Do not try to whisper the word. Say the word in a normal speaking voice. You should feel no vibrations on your throat for the sounds **fff** and **sss**.

Now say the word **fun** slowly and feel your throat. Your throat should not buzz for the **fff** sound. But it should buzz for both **uuu** and **nnn**. The sound **nnn** is a voiced sound.

Now say the word **run** and feel your throat. Your throat should buzz for all sounds—**rrr**, **uuu**, and **nnn**. The **rrr** is a voiced sound.

Do not present a lesson that introduces a new sound until you can produce the sound accurately and consistently. (If you misteach a sound, your child will have a lot of trouble later in the program when trying to read words that include that sound.)

Pay particular attention to the pronunciation of the following sounds:

- **r**. Do not say “urrr” for this symbol or the child will have a lot of trouble reading words like **run**. The child will try to call the word “urun.” Use the sound that is at the end of the word **bar**. It is a single sound that can be held.
- **th**. The sound for this symbol is *voiced*. There is a whispered **th** for words like **math** and **thing**. The voiced sound occurs in words like **them**, **then**, **that**, and **those**. This sound is the one that is taught in the program.
- **h**. The **h** sound is very tricky. It is produced quickly by letting out a little air *with no voice*.
- **y**. The sound we use for this symbol occurs only at the beginning of words (**yēard**). It is quite similar to the sound **ēēē** (as in **eat**), but it is slightly more restricted. If you have trouble with the sound, say **ēēē**. It will work pretty well.
- **oo**. This symbol refers to the sound in **boo**, **moon**, and **toot**, not to the sound in **look**, **soot**, or **book**.
- **wh**. This sound is pronounced differently in different parts of the country. In the East it is unvoiced. In the Midwest and West it is voiced. Use the pronunciation that is appropriate for your speech.

In addition to indicating whether a sound is voiced or whispered, the column of the sounds chart labeled “Pronounced” shows whether the sound can be held or must be said very rapidly.

If a sound can be held, three symbols are shown for the sound (such as **mmm** and **sss**). These symbols tell you that you should be able to hold the sound for at least two seconds without distorting it. Note that you are not to say the sound repeatedly (“m—m—m”). You are to take a deep breath and say it one time, holding it for at least two seconds.

The sounds that cannot be held are shown in the “pronounced” column as single letters, **d**, **c**, **t**. These sounds must be said very quickly. Say the word **mad** slowly and loudly. The last sound you say is the appropriate pronunciation for the **d** sound. It is a voiced sound. (Feel your throat.) It does not have an “uh” sound following it (not “mmaaaaduh”), and it must be said very quickly.

To use the sounds chart, refer to the last column. That column tells you the lesson in which a new sound is introduced. In Lesson 1, the sounds for **m** and **s** are introduced. Practice these sounds before presenting the lesson. Both sounds are voiced. Check the column labeled “As in” to make sure that you are using the right pronunciation for the letter, particularly the vowels. The symbol **a** is introduced in Lesson 3. It has many different pronunciations when we deal with traditional orthography. For the beginning of the program that you will use, the symbol **a** refers to only one sound—the first sound in the word **and**. Note that you will *never* say “aaa as in **and**” to the child. The model word is to show *you* the sound you are to say for **a**.

Saying Words Slowly

Practice saying words without pausing between the sounds. As noted earlier, the child will have a much easier time identifying words that are sounded out if the child learns to blend the sounds by saying them without pausing between the sounds.

Beginning with Lesson 1, you will say words slowly, without pausing between the sounds. The words that you will say in Lesson 1 are **am**, **me**, **in**, and **she**.

Practice saying these words properly. Start with **am**. Put your hand on your throat. Take a deep breath. Say “aaamm,” holding each sound for at least two seconds. Do not stop between the sounds. If you stop, you will feel your throat stop buzzing. Your throat should buzz from the first instant of “aaamm” to the last, with no inter-

ruption. Remember to hold both sounds for about an equal amount of time. Do not say a very fast a sound followed by a long **mmm** sound. Try to hold each sound for two seconds.

Practice the other words—**me**, **in**, and **she**. Note that when you practice **she**, your voice will not start until you say the sound **ēēē**; however, you should hold the **shshsh** sound for two seconds, and there should be no time during which there is silence. The **ēēē** sound should begin as soon as the **shshsh** sound stops, but there should not be the slightest pause (silence) between these two sounds.

Beginning with Lesson 1, your child will say words slowly after you say them. Make sure the child does not stop between the sounds. Correct mistakes immediately. Your child shouldn't have any serious problems with this task if you do a good job of saying the words slowly, one sound at a time.

The same rules that apply to pronouncing sounds in isolation apply to saying words slowly. Some sounds cannot be held for more than an instant. To say the word **mat** slowly, you would hold the first two sounds for two seconds each. Then you would quickly say the **t** sound: "mmaaat." (Remember, this sound is whispered.) (Note that there is a silence immediately before the sounds **c**, **t**, and **p** when they occur at the end of words. This pause is acceptable because a pause occurs when we say the words at a normal speaking rate.)

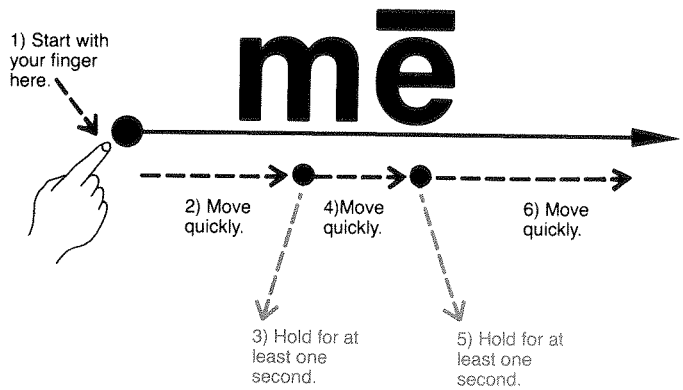
Sounding Out Words

Beginning with Lesson 9, you will direct your child to sound out written words and then say them fast. The words to be read look like this:



For each word, you will first touch the big ball at the beginning of the arrow that runs under the word to be read. You tell the child to "sound it out." Then you move to each ball on the arrow and stop for at least *one second*. (One second is not one instant. It is a fairly long time.)

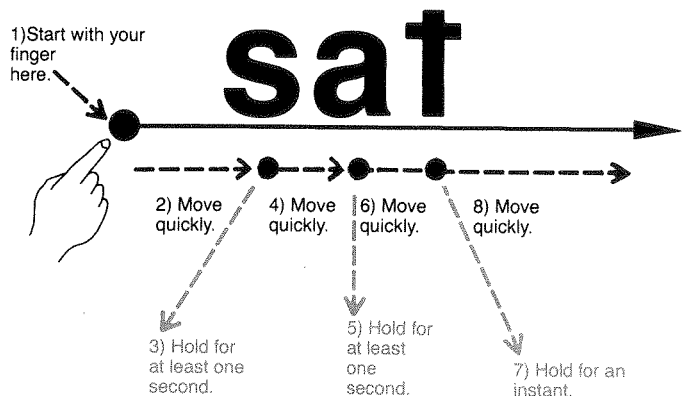
The illustration below shows what you are to do.



Practice moving quickly along the arrow and then stopping for at least one second at each ball. After you have stopped at the last ball for at least one second, move quickly to the end of the arrow.

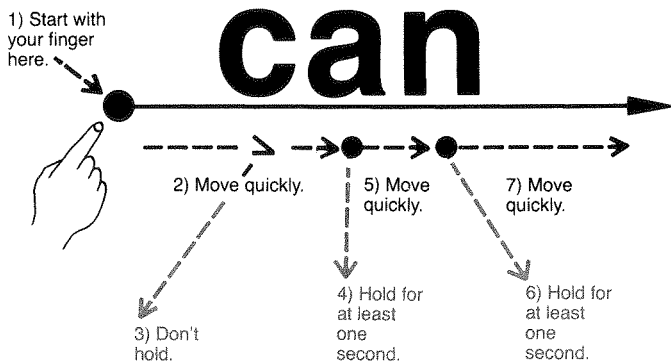
The child is to say the sounds as soon as you touch the ball for each sound. The child is to keep holding the sound until you touch the ball for the next sound. The child is then to say the next sound without stopping. (The child is to say "mmmee," not "mmm"—pause—"eee.") The child's task will be much easier if you remember to move fairly quickly from one sound to the next. (Note that if you move too quickly, the child will not know what sound to say next and will not be able to respond when you touch the next ball. If you move too slowly, the child will run out of air before saying the last sound.)

Some words end in sounds that cannot be held for a long period of time. You present these words almost the same way you present words with sounds that can be held. The only difference is that you don't stop at the last sound for a full second. You stop for an instant and then move quickly to the end of the arrow.



The program script for each task indicates the response the child is to produce. The response for the word above is “sssaaat.” The response shows that the child holds the first sounds but does not hold the last sound. The way you touch the sounds should parallel the response the child is to produce. Hold the first sounds for at least one second each. Stop for a moment under the t.

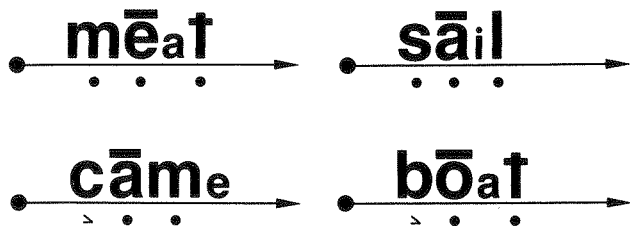
In Lesson 21 a new type of word is introduced. This type begins with a sound that cannot be held. It is the most difficult type of word the child will read. The illustration below shows your behavior for presenting these words.



As you point, the child produces the response “caaannn.” Note the symbol under the **c** in **can**. It is an arrow shape, not a ball. You do not stop under the **c**. The arrow symbol indicates that although you do not stop, the sound is to be pronounced. It is pronounced when you stop under the next sound (**a**). At that time the child says “caaa.”

Remember, when an arrow shape appears under a letter, you do not stop or even pause under the sound. The child says the sound in combination with the next sound when you stop at the next ball.

Some words would be regular if they did not have “silent letters.” Among these words are **meat**, **sail**, **came**, and **boat**. When these words are first introduced in **Distar** orthography, they are written this way:



Note that there is neither a ball nor a small arrowhead under the silent letters. You do not pause for these letters or stop at them. When the child says the sounds for the letters that are marked with balls and arrowheads, the child says the sounds for the word. Later in the program, beginning with Lesson 74, the small letters become full-size. The child typically has no trouble reading them because the child has dealt with each word many times by Lesson 74. The transition is therefore not difficult.

No Skipping Allowed!

We have made this point several times, but it is extremely important. Do not push your child by skipping lessons or by introducing new procedures before the program presents them. It is possible that your child *may* be able to progress at a rate faster than that of the program sequence; however, before this possibility is a fact, you must consider the nature of the reading skill. The goal of decoding instruction is to make decoding an automatic practice, not something that requires a great deal of thinking time or a great deal of effort. Therefore, the program should progress at a rate somewhat slower than what would be possible if the only criterion for decoding were, Can the child do it? In other words, if your child is on Lesson 30 and you were to skip ahead to Lesson 50, you would find that indeed your child can read some of the words—maybe most of them. But simply being able to read the words is not enough. You must make sure that the child has enough practice to become relatively fluent. The task of decoding should not be a supreme effort. The goal of fluency and ease of reading is achieved if you stay well within the bounds of what the child is capable of doing. No harm will come of the child’s reading the words **was** or **ram** ten or fifteen more times before reaching Lesson 50. The additional practice will simply make Lesson 50 easier and provide more reinforcement for the child. So do not skip.

Also, do not introduce such skills as “reading the fast way” (without sounding out words) before the program introduces them. Certainly the child can learn these skills earlier. But unless the child is very firm on sounding out, you may have no ready way to correct the mistakes made later when the child begins to “word guess.” If the sounding out is very firm, you will easily be

able to correct mistakes when the child later reads words the fast way. If the child has learned simply to say words, the child may have very little trouble early in the program but may encounter very serious problems when highly similar-looking words begin to appear. (After **that**, **this**, **those**, **them**, **then**, and **than** have been introduced, the child is not able to use a simple word-reading strategy that works when **the** and **that** are the only words that begin with **th**.)

Reinforcement and Corrections

To work effectively with your child, you must convey the information the child needs. You must also respond to your child's efforts. In responding to these efforts, you should reinforce appropriate behaviors and correct mistakes.

Although the lessons should be overwhelmingly reinforcing, do not confuse being reinforcing with being soft. You are soft if you "overlook" mistakes or if you let the child get by with a sloppy effort. This behavior is not reinforcing. Furthermore, it is not realistic. The skills that are taught early in the program will be used later—all of them. If they are weak when they are presented in their simplest form, early in the program, they will most certainly be weak later, when the child is expected to use them in complex tasks. If the child is weak in all the components of the complex task (which is what will happen if you use a very low standard on all skills), the child will fail hopelessly. The only remedy would be to take the child back to the beginning of the program and start over, this time with a firm criterion on performance.

Some statements of reinforcement are specified in the script for the daily lessons. However, the script does not tell you how to respond to all the good things that should be praised. To be reinforcing, follow these rules:

1. If the child is working hard, praise the child: "You are a really hard worker." (You can use this kind of praise even if the child's performance is not perfect.)
2. If the child performs well, praise the child: "That's amazing. You are really smart."
3. If the child performs well on a task that presented problems earlier, express surprise. "You got that right this time. I thought you'd have a lot more trouble than that. You're terrific."

4. Give the child a chance to show off skills that have been mastered. "Wait until your father sees you do that tonight. He'll never believe it."

Note that three of these four points express surprise. The most effective reinforcement that you can present is built around surprise, because the surprise shows that the child did not merely do what you expected, but more. Doing better than you expect is one of the most reinforcing experiences a child can have. Therefore, the most effective procedure you can use to assure that the child will find learning to read very reinforcing is to challenge the child. If you challenge the child to do something you think the child can do, and if the child succeeds, you can act amazed. Start by expressing a challenge. Ideally, the challenge should involve a group of tasks, not a single task. "Let's do the say-it-fast tasks for today. I'll bet that you can't do them all without making more than two mistakes. These are very hard words in the lesson today."

Present the tasks. If the child makes fewer than two mistakes (which will probably happen), respond by saying something like "You didn't make one mistake. I think you just got lucky. There is no way you could be that good at say-it-fast."

Even if the child does make more than two mistakes, you are in a good position to permit the child to save face without feeling defeated. "Those were hard words, weren't they? Let's go over them one more time and make sure that we can do them. I'll bet some of them will come up again tomorrow."

To make the challenge effective, pick a group of tasks that you are pretty sure the child can do. If the child is firm on sounds, say, "I don't think you'll be able to get all the sounds today without making a mistake."

Remember, the goal of the challenge is not to tease the child or to make fun of failure. The challenge is designed to let the child show you that she can do more than you expect. If you say, "I wouldn't be surprised if you missed two or three of the sounds today," the stage is set for the child to make *no* mistakes (or possibly one) and for you to say, "Wow, you did it. I don't believe it. Those were hard." Remember, if you cannot say, "Wow, you did it" at the end, the challenge was either a complete flop or less than a total success. The "Wow, you did it" is what the challenge is all about.

Two technical points about reinforcement:

1. If you reinforce the child after *every* task, you will actually be teaching the child to go off-task rather than to work through the lesson. The child learns that following each task will be a “reinforcement break.”
2. The same thing will happen if you frequently use elaborate (lengthy) reinforcement.

Do not reinforce the child after every single task. The challenge should always be presented for a group of tasks. As you present each task within the group, make *very* brief comments such as “That’s it” or “Good job.” These interruptions should take no more than a second or two at most. Try to maintain very fast pacing from one task to the next. As soon as the child successfully completes a task, present the next task with the smallest interruption possible. This procedure is important not only from a “management” standpoint, but from a communication standpoint also. If the examples are presented quickly, one right after the other, the child will more readily see how the examples are the same and how they are different. If long pauses intervene, the child will not receive a message that is as clear.

If the child interrupts you while you are presenting, do not reinforce the behavior. If you listen to the child or permit the interruption, you reinforce interruptions, and they will occur with increasing frequency. Simply tell the child, “Whoa. Not now.” Continue with the task. After you have completed a group of tasks (such as the say-it-fast tasks specified for the lesson), praise the child (if the child performed well). Then, “Now what was it you wanted to say earlier?”

In addition to discouraging the child from interrupting you, praise the child for not interrupting. Do not overdo this kind of reinforcement. But if the child has a tendency to interrupt and if the child does not interrupt during a group of tasks, say, “You are really a big person. You didn’t interrupt one time. That’s great. I didn’t know you could work that hard.”

A final reinforcement procedure: Occasionally a child becomes frustrated, has a bad day, and may produce a tear or two. A good way to respond to this behavior is to say, “Do you know how I know that everything is going to be all right tomorrow? You’re crying. That means you care. That’s good, because if you care, you’ll keep working, and if you keep working, you’ll get it. Do you know why? Because you’re very smart.”

Corrections

When the child makes a mistake, correct it immediately. If the child makes a mistake on the second letter of a word that is being sounded out, do not wait until the child finishes sounding out the word before correcting. Correct immediately. Correction procedures are specified for the most common mistakes the child will make. These corrections are based on the three things a good correction should do:

1. Alert the child to the mistake and where it occurred.
2. Provide practice with the skill the child needs to overcome the mistake.
3. Test the child within the context in which the mistake occurred.

If the child makes a mistake in identifying the third sound that is presented in a sound exercise:

1. Signal the mistake: “Stop.”
2. Provide practice with the skill: “This sound is **aaa**. What sound?”
3. Test the child within the context in which the mistakes occurred. “Remember that sound. Let’s go back and do those sounds again.” Repeat the sounds in order, starting with sound 1. If the child is able to respond to the third sound correctly, the mistake has been corrected. (This assertion does not mean that the child will never misidentify the symbol again; it means that you know the child is able to handle the activity in which the mistake occurred.)

All three steps are important. If you simply tell the child the “answer” without testing the child, you have no way of knowing whether the correction was transmitted.

Step 2 of the correction does not always mean that you “tell the answer.” The only way the child will know the sound that is called for by a given symbol is if you say it; however, some mistakes are different. If the child uses a particular skill, the child will be able to figure out the answer. For instance, if the child is sounding out the word **ram** but is unable to say the word after sounding it out, you would not tell the child the word. Instead, you would make it easier for the child to say the word fast.

Here is the correction:

1. You stop the child after a few seconds. You do not let the child flounder. “Stop.”

2. "Listen: **rrraaamm**. Say that." (Child says:) "rrraaamm."
"Now say it fast." (Child says:) "ram."
"That's it."
3. Point to the written word **ram**. "Now do it here. Sound it out."
(Child says:) "rrraaamm."
"Say it fast." (Child says:) "ram."
"You did it."

Learn this correction procedure. You will probably have many occasions to use it. Note that it follows the same three steps as the correction for sound identification. You first signal that a mistake has been made. You then provide practice in the skill needed to overcome the mistake. Finally, you test the child on the word in which the mistake occurred.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

The program includes sound writing as part of each lesson. It does not specify other activities that reinforce reading skills. Note that the purpose of sound writing is not to teach writing or penmanship. The rationale for sound writing is that if the child copies sounds, the child must attend to the shape details of the sounds. If the child attends to these details and associates them with the name of the sound, the child will learn the sounds faster and better. The sound-writing exercises, in other words, are included because of their reading-related value.

Note: It is not necessary to make **sh**, **th**, **wh**, **ch**, **er**, and **qu** so that they are actually joined. But identify each combination by the sound presented in the program.

To make it easier for the child to see how complex letters are formed (**a**, **w**, **t**, **h**, and other letters shown with two or more arrows), use two different-colored chalk (or pencil) lines. *Always* make the first part of complex letters with the same color and *always* make the second part with the same second color. (For instance, always make the first part with yellow and the second part with white.)

You may also teach writing and spelling. In fact, the reading program sets the stage for both additional activities. What follows is an outline for the more basic reinforcement activities that you might present.

Copying words. Beginning with Lesson 30, you can introduce copying words. Pick any words that have been presented in the reading lesson. Write three or four words on paper or the chalkboard (using **Distar** orthography). Leave a space below each word and a line on which the child is to copy the words. Direct the child to sound out the words that you have written, then to copy each word.

Writing words from "dictation." Beginning in Lesson 35, you can present a more sophisticated writing activity (one that is presented in addition to the copying activity, not as a substitute). Use this procedure:

"You're going to write a word that I say.

"Listen: **mat**. I'll say the word slowly: **mmaaat**. Say that."

"Write the first sound in **mmaaat**.

"Now listen again: **mmaaat**. Write the next sound in *mat*.

"Listen again: **mmaaat**. Write the last sound in *mat*."





























If the child has trouble isolating the sounds from the word, first say the word, then tell the child the first sound. Say the word again. Then say the next sound. After presenting the third sound in the same way, present the exercise above. Use any of the words that have been presented in the lessons.



























Writing stories from pictures. Beginning in Lesson 50, present pictures to the child. For each picture tell the child, "Make up a story for this picture." Reinforce the child for spelling words phonetically. Do not expect the child to spell words conventionally (particularly irregular words). Typically, the child will have very few inhibitions about expressing very elaborate ideas and tackling any word composed of known sounds. The result will be horrible misspellings but very clever recordings of the way we say those words.

THE SCHEDULE

Typically, lessons do not take more than fifteen minutes. In fact, you may be able to present most lessons in twelve minutes. It is a good idea, however, to make a schedule that allows twenty minutes for each lesson. If you finish early, you

SOUND-WRITING CHART

m	Start with vertical line: 	Add humps: 
s	Start at top: 	
a	Start with backward s: 	Add ball: 
e	Start with horizontal line:  Note: Do not make long line over e.	Make c around it: 
t	Start with vertical line: 	Cross near top: 
r	Start with vertical line: 	Add curved line: 
d	Start with c: 	Add vertical line: 
i	Start with vertical line: 	Add dot: 
c		
o	Start like c: 	Close: 
n	Make first part of m: 	
f	Start with cane: 	Add horizontal line: 
u	Start with cane: 	Add vertical line: 
l	Make vertical line: 	
g	Start with c: 	Add: 
h	Start with vertical line: 	Add hump: 

k	Start with vertical line: ↓	Add v shape: 
v	Make v: 	
w	Start with v: 	Add v: 
th	Start with cane: 	Add vertical line:  Add hump and cross: 
sh	Start with s: 	Add h: 
p	Start with vertical line: ↓	Close with backward c: 
ch	Start with c: 	Add h: 
b	Start with vertical line: ↓	Close with backward c: 
y	Start: 	Add: 
er	Start with e: 	Add r: 
j	Start with vertical line: ↓	Add curve: 
wh	Start with: 	Add h: 
x	Start: 	Cross: 
z	Start with horizontal line: →	Add v shape: 
qu	Start with c: 	Add vertical line:  Add u: 

can either quit at that time or permit the child to select a fun activity, such as the child playing teacher and presenting part of the lesson to you.

Schedule the lessons for a specific time each day. A good time is before dinner. Because the lessons do not take very long, you may decide to schedule the reading every day of the week (not just on Monday through Friday). The advantage of the every-day schedule is that the reading becomes a daily, nonnegotiable part of the day. When children understand that something is part of the daily schedule, they accept it far more readily than they do if it comes and goes or, even worse, if it is open to negotiation. Do not negotiate the schedule. Do not make deals over it. Discuss it after you have made it up. Change it if it is inconvenient or unworkable, but do not succumb to "I'm tired today" or "Do we have to? Huh?" Just smile and say, "Oh, come on, it only takes a few minutes and you're so smart you'll go through it like nothing," or "Well, let's work hard and see how quickly we can get it over with." Do not argue.

Some parents who have used **Distar** Fast Cycle have found that they can schedule two lessons a day—one early in the day, the other in the evening. These parents found that the early lessons go so quickly that presenting two lessons during one day is not a problem. Often they were right. Sometimes, however, this schedule overwhelms the child with information, even during the early lessons. If you feel that two lessons a day is possible for your child, try it. But remain extremely sensitive to the possibility that the new sounds and new skills introduced by the program may come so fast that the child does not have adequate time to digest them and become thoroughly facile with them. If you notice that your child does not have good retention of things that were presented in earlier lessons, abandon the schedule or modify it. A good modification is to present one entire lesson in the morning. In the evening, repeat the first part of that lesson. This part includes the work on sounds and blending (and, later in the program, word reading). Do not repeat the writing and comprehension activities for the lesson. If the child does well on the review of the lesson presented earlier (which should take no more than ten minutes), begin the next lesson. Stop when the twenty-minute period is over. Begin the next lesson where you left off.

Posting your schedule is a very good idea. In that way you can use the schedule as a symbol

of the child's success. If you make up a schedule that looks like a calendar, you can end each lesson by writing the number of the lesson just completed on the schedule. You can indicate that the child has mastered the lesson by making a star or a smiling face next to the lesson number. From time to time refer to the number of lessons that have been mastered. "Wow. You've already got twenty stars. Look at that!" This technique makes your schedule a strong reinforcer.

Practicing the early lessons. Each lesson presents a script for all activities in the lesson, which indicates precisely what you are to say. It also indicates what the child is to do and what the child is to say when producing a correct response for each task that you present. Before you work with your child, make sure that you can present the tasks without fumbling or stopping while you figure out what to say or whether the child's response is correct. The only way to become facile with the scripts is to practice them. And practice means just that. Read the script out loud. Practice doing what the script tells you to do—for example, touching the ball at the beginning of the arrow for the sound exercises, and then moving along the arrow. After you present directions that call for a child's response, say that response to yourself.

These are the conventions for the script:

- What you *say* appears in red type.
- What you or the child does appears in parentheses.
- What the child says is presented within quotation marks.

Here is part of a task from Lesson 1:

5. Your turn to say the sound when I touch under it. (Touch first ball.) Get ready. (Move quickly to second ball. Hold.) "ssssss."

You first say, "Your turn to say the sound when I touch under it." You then touch the first ball. Then you say, "Get ready." You move quickly to the second ball and hold. As you do this, the child says, "Sssssss." For this task, the child produces the response, "sss." For other tasks, you will model or show the correct response. But remember, when the child is supposed to talk, you don't talk. And you don't move your lips to mouth the response or clue the child. You simply move under the ball and stop. The child produces the response.

PRACTICE PRESENTING LESSONS 1 AND 2

Assume that the child is sitting next to you.

Present each task of the lesson out loud. Remember, when the script indicates that the child is to respond, you are not to respond with the child or lead the child.

Go through the lesson a couple of times, until you can present it without looking at the book all the time. Remember, you are going to have

to observe the child and respond to what the child says. Try to maintain fast pacing from task to task, but do not rush each task. Present each task in a conversational way, not in a stilted, schoolmarm manner.

Practice quick praises for quick response, and practice corrections.

After you take these steps you will be ready, and the preparation for the later lessons should not take more than a quick run-through before you present them to your child.

LESSON 1

TASK 1 SOUNDS INTRODUCTION

1. (Point to **m**.) I'm going to touch under this sound and say the sound. (Touch first ball of arrow. Move quickly to second ball. Hold two seconds.) mmmmmm. (Release point.)
2. Your turn to say the sound when I touch under it. (Touch first ball.) Get ready. (Move quickly to second ball. Hold.) "mmmmm."

(To correct child saying a wrong sound or not responding:) The sound is mmmmmm. (Repeat step 2.)

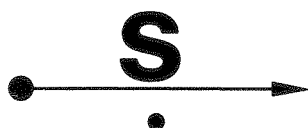
3. (Touch first ball.) Again. Get ready. (Move quickly to second ball. Hold.) "mmmmm." (Repeat three more times.)



4. (Point to **s**.) I'm going to touch under this sound and say the sound. (Touch first ball of arrow. Move quickly to second ball. Hold.) ssssss. (Release point.)
5. Your turn to say the sound when I touch under it. (Touch first ball.) Get ready. (Move quickly to second ball. Hold.) "sssss."

(To correct child saying a wrong sound or not responding:) The sound is ssssss. (Repeat step 5.)

6. (Touch first ball.) Again. Get ready. (Move quickly to second ball. Hold.) "sssss." (Repeat three more times.)



TASK 2 SAY IT FAST

31

1. Let's play say-it-fast. My turn: **motor** (pause) **boat**. (Pause.) Say it fast. **motorboat**.
2. Your turn. Wait until I tell you to say it fast. **motor** (pause) **boat**. (Pause.) Say it fast. "motorboat." (Repeat step 2 until firm.)

(To correct child saying word slowly—for example, "motor [pause] boat":) You didn't say it fast. Here's saying it fast: **motorboat**. Say that. "motorboat." Now let's do that part again. (Repeat step 2.)

3. New word. Listen: **ice** (pause) **cream**. (Pause.) Say it fast. "icecream."
4. New word. Listen: **sis** (pause) **ter**. (Pause.) Say it fast. "sister."
5. New word. Listen: **ham** (pause) **burger**. (Pause.) Say it fast. "hamburger."
6. New word. Listen: **mmmēēē**. (Pause.) Say it fast. "me."
7. New word. Listen: **iiiff**. (Pause.) Say it fast. "if."
8. (Repeat any words child had trouble with.)

TASK 3 SAY THE SOUNDS

1. I'm going to say some words slowly, without stopping. Then you'll say them with me.
2. First I'll say **am** slowly. Listen: **aaammm**. Now I'll say **me** slowly. Listen: **mmmēēē**. Now I'll say **in** slowly. Listen: **iiinnn**. Now I'll say **she** slowly. Listen: **shshshēēē**.
3. Now it's your turn to say the words slowly with me. Take a deep breath and we'll say **aaammm**. Get ready. "aaammm."

(To correct if child stops between sounds—for example, "aaa [pause] mmm":) Don't stop. Listen. (Don't pause between sounds **a** and **m** as you say **aaammm**.) Take a deep breath and we'll say **aaammm**. Get ready. "aaammm." (Repeat until child responds with you.)

4. Now we'll say **iiinnn**. Get ready. "iiinnn." Now we'll say **ooonnn**. Get ready. "ooonnn."
5. Your turn to say words slowly by yourself. Say **aaammm**. Get ready. "aaammm." Say **iiiff**. Get ready. "iiiff." Say **mmmēēē**. Get ready. "mmmēēē." Good saying the words slowly.

32 **TASK 4 SOUNDS REVIEW**

1. Let's do the sounds again. See if you remember them. (Touch first ball for **m**.) Get ready. (Quickly move to second ball. Hold.) "mmmmmm."



2. (Touch first ball for **s**.) Get ready. (Quickly move to second ball. Hold.) "sssss."



TASK 5 SAY IT FAST

1. Let's play say-it-fast again. Listen: **motor** (pause) **cycle**. Say it fast. "motorcycle."
2. **mmmēēē**. (Pause.) Say it fast. "me." **iiiff**. (Pause.) Say it fast. "if." **shshhēēē**. (Pause.) Say it fast. "she."

TASK 6 SOUNDS WRITING

(Note: Refer to each symbol by its sound, not by its letter name. Make horizontal rules on paper or a chalkboard about two inches apart. Separate writing spaces by spaces about one inch apart. Optionally, divide writing spaces in half with a dotted line: .)

1. See chart on page 24 for steps in writing **m** and **s**.) You're going to write the sounds that I write. You're going to write a sound on each line. I'll show you how to make each sound. Then you'll write each sound. Here's the first sound you're going to write.
2. Here's how you make **mmm**. Watch. (Make **m** at the beginning of first line. Start with a vertical line:

↓
Then add the humps:

(Point to **m**.) What sound? "mmm." First you're going to trace the **mmm** that I made. Then you're going to make more of them on the line.

3. (Help child trace sound two or three times. Child is then to make three to five **m**'s on top line. Help child if necessary. For each acceptable letter child makes, say:) Good writing **mmm**.
4. Here's how to make **sss**. Watch. (Make **s** at beginning of second line. Point to **s**.) What sound? "sss."
5. First you're going to trace the **sss** that I made. Then you're going to make more of them on the line. (Help child trace sound two or three times. Child is then to make three to five **s**'s on second line. Help child if necessary. For each acceptable letter child makes, say:) Good writing **sss**.

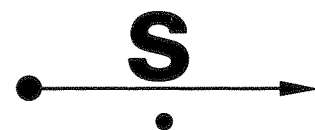
LESSON 2

TASK 1 SOUNDS REVIEW

1. (Point to **m**.) I'm going to touch under this sound and say the sound. (Touch first ball of arrow. Move quickly to second ball. Hold two seconds.) **mmmmmm**. (Release point.)
2. Your turn to say the sound when I touch under it. (Touch first ball.) Get ready. (Move quickly to second ball. Hold.) "mmmmmm."

(To correct child saying a wrong sound or not responding:) The sound is **mmmmmm**. (Repeat step 2.)

3. (Touch first ball.) Again. Get ready. (Move quickly to second ball. Hold.) "mmmmmm." (Repeat three more times.)



- (Point to **s**.) I'm going to touch under this sound and say the sound. (Touch first ball of arrow. Move quickly to second ball. Hold.) **ssssss**. (Release point.)
- Your turn to say the sound when I touch under it. (Touch first ball.) Get ready. (Move quickly to second ball. Hold.) "ssssss."

(To correct child saying a wrong sound or not responding:) The sound is **ssssss**. (Repeat step 5.)

- (Touch first ball.) Again. Get ready. (Move quickly to second ball. Hold.) "ssssss." (Repeat three more times.)

TASK 2 SAY IT FAST

- Let's play say-it-fast. My turn: **lawn** (pause) **mower**. (Pause.) Say it fast. **lawnmower**.
- Your turn. Wait until I tell you to say it fast. **lawn** (pause) **mower**. (Pause.) Say it fast. "lawnmower." (Repeat step 2 until firm.)

(To correct child saying word slowly—for example, "lawn [pause] mower":) You didn't say it fast. Here's saying it fast: **lawnmower**. Say that. "lawnmower." Now let's do that part again. (Repeat step 2.)

- New word. Listen: **side** (pause) **walk**. (Pause.) Say it fast. "sidewalk."
- New word. Listen: **iiiff**. (Pause.) Say it fast. "if."
- New word. Listen: **mmmēēē**. (Pause.) Say it fast. "me."
- New word. Listen: **aaamm**. (Pause.) Say it fast. "am."
- New word. Listen: **iiinn**. (Pause.) Say it fast. "in."
- New word. Listen: **shshshēēē**. (Pause.) Say it fast. "she."
- (Repeat any words child had trouble with.)

TASK 3 SAY THE SOUNDS

- I'm going to say some words slowly, without stopping. Then you'll say them with me.
- First I'll say **she** slowly. Listen: **shshshēēē**. Now I'll say **me** slowly. Listen: **mmmēēē**. Now I'll say **ship** slowly. Listen: **shshshiip**.
- Now it's your turn to say the words slowly with me. Take a deep breath and we'll say **shshshēēē**. Get ready. "shshshēēē."

(To correct if child stops between sounds—for example, "shshsh [pause] ēēē":) Don't stop. Listen. (Don't pause between sounds **sh** and **ē** as you say **shshshēēē**.) Take a deep breath and we'll say **shshshēēē**. Get ready. "shshshēēē." (Repeat until child responds with you.)

- Now we'll say **mmmēēē**. Get ready. "mmmēēē." Now we'll say **shshshiip**. Get ready. "shshshiip." Now we'll say **aaamm**. Get ready. "aaamm." Now we'll say **iiinn**. Get ready. "iiinn." Now we'll say **iiiff**. Get ready. "iiiff."
- Your turn to say the words slowly by yourself. Say **shshshēēē**. Get ready. "shshshēēē." Say **mmmēēē**. Get ready. "mmmēēē." Say **shshshiip**. Get ready. "shshshiip." Say **aaamm**. Get ready. "aaamm." Say **iiinn**. Get ready. "iiinn." Say **iiiff**. Get ready. "iiiff." Good saying the words slowly.

TASK 4 SOUNDS REVIEW

- Let's do the sounds again. See if you remember them. (Touch first ball for **m**.) Get ready. (Quickly move to second ball. Hold.) "mmmmmm."



- (Touch first ball for **s**.) Get ready. (Quickly move to second ball. Hold.) "ssssss."



- Let's play say-it-fast again. Listen: **sis** (pause) **ter**. Say it fast. "sister."
- Mis** (pause) **ter**. (Pause.) Say it fast. "mister."
mo (pause) **ther**. (Pause.) Say it fast. "mother."
iiiff. (Pause.) Say it fast. "if."
sssēēē. (Pause.) Say it fast. "see."
nnnōōō. (Pause.) Say it fast. "no."
aaamm. (Pause.) Say it fast. "am."

TASK 6 SAY THE SOUNDS

- Your turn to say the words slowly. Say **mmaaaannn**. "mmaaaannn." Say **wwwiiiii**. "wwwiiiii." Say **shshshēēē**. "shshshēēē." Say **sssiit**. "sssiit."

(To correct child saying a wrong word or not responding:) Listen. (Don't pause between sounds **s**, **i**, and **t**, as you say **sssiit**.) Take a deep breath and we'll say **sssiit**. Get ready. "sssiit." (Repeat until firm.)

TASK 7 SOUNDS WRITING

- (See chart on page 24 for steps in writing **s** and **m**.)
- You're going to write the sounds that I write. Here's the first sound you're going to write.
- (Write **s** at beginning of first line. Point to **s**.) What sound? "sss."
- First trace the **sss** that I made. Then make more of them on this line. (After tracing **s** several times, child is to make three to five **s**'s. Help child if necessary. For acceptable letters say:) Good writing **sss**.
- Here's the next sound you're going to write. (Write **m** at beginning of second line. Point to **m**.) What sound? "mmm."
- First trace the **mmm** that I made. Then make more of them on this line. (After tracing **m** several times, child is to make three to five **m**'s. Help child if necessary. For acceptable letters say:) Good writing **mmm**.

LESSON 3

TASK 1 SOUNDS INTRODUCTION

- (Point to **a**.) Here's a new sound. I'm going to touch under this sound and say the sound. (Touch first ball of arrow. Move quickly to second ball. Hold.) **āāāāā**.
- Your turn to say the sound when I touch under it. (Touch first ball.) Get ready. (Move quickly to second ball. Hold.) "āāāāā."

(To correct child saying a wrong sound or not responding:) The sound is **āāāāā**. (Repeat step 2.)

- (Touch first ball.) Again. Get ready. (Move quickly to second ball. Hold.) "āāāāā."

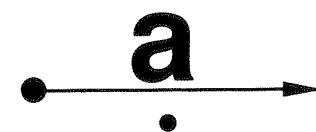


TASK 2 SOUNDS REVIEW

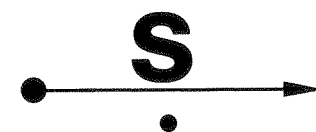
- You're going to say all these sounds. (Touch first ball for **m**.) Get ready. (Quickly move to second ball. Hold.) "mmmmmm."



- (Touch first ball for **a**.) Get ready. (Quickly move to second ball. Hold.) "aaaaaa."



- (Touch first ball for **s**.) Get ready. (Quickly move to second ball. Hold.) "ssssss."



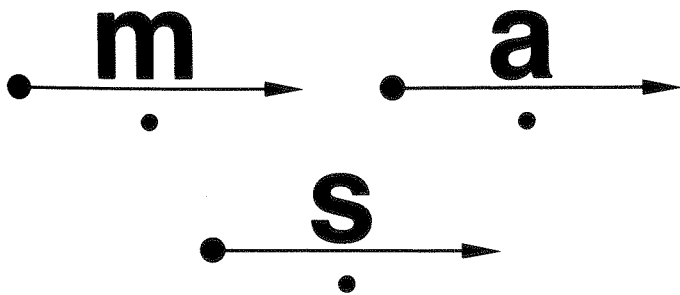
TASK 3 SAY THE SOUNDS

1. Your turn to say the words slowly. Say rrruuunnn. "rrruunnn." Say mmmmaaannn. "mmmaaannn." Say thththiiisss. "thththiiisss." Say wwwēēē. "wwwēēē." Say shshshēēē. "shshshēēē."

(To correct child saying a wrong word or not responding:) Listen. (Don't stop between sounds **sh** and **ē** as you say **shshshēēē**.) Take a deep breath and we'll say **shshshēēē**. Get ready. "shshshēēē." (Repeat until firm.)

TASK 4 SOUNDS

1. Let's play say-it-fast with these sounds. My turn. (Touch first ball for **m**. Move quickly to second ball. Hold.) mmmmmm. (Release.) (Touch first ball.) Say it fast. (Move quickly to end of arrow.) **m**.
2. Your turn. First you'll say it slowly. Then you'll say it fast. (Touch first ball for **m**.) Say the sound slowly. (Move quickly to second ball. Hold.) "mmmmm." (Release.) (Touch first ball.) Say it fast. (Move quickly to end of arrow.) "**m**."
3. (Touch first ball for **a**.) Say the sound slowly. (Move quickly to second ball. Hold.) "aaaaa." (Release.) (Touch first ball for **a**.) Say it fast. (Move quickly to end of arrow.) "**a**."



4. (Touch first ball for **m**.) Say the sound slowly. (Move quickly to second ball. Hold.) "mmmmm." (Release.) (Touch first ball for **m**.) Say it fast. (Move quickly to end of arrow.) "**m**."
5. (Touch first ball for **s**.) Say the sound slowly. (Move quickly to second ball. Hold.) "sssss." (Touch first ball for **s**. Hold.) Say it fast. (Move quickly to end of arrow.) "**s**."

6. (Touch first ball for **a**.) Say the sound slowly. (Move quickly to second ball. Hold.) "aaaaa." (Touch first ball for **a**.) Say it fast. (Move quickly to end of arrow.) "**a**."

TASK 5 SAY THE SOUNDS

1. We're going to play a new say-it-fast game. First you'll say the word that I say slowly. Then you'll say it fast. Say (pause) mmmēēē. "mmmēēē." Now say it fast. "me."
2. Say (pause) mmmmaaannn. "mmmaaannn." Now say it fast. "man." Say (pause) iiifff. "iiiff." Now say it fast. "if." Say wwwēēē. "wwwēēē." Now say it fast. "we."
3. Let's do those words again. (Repeat step 2 until firm.)

TASK 6 SAY THE SOUNDS

1. I'm going to say the sounds on the arrow. (Touch first ball. Quickly move to second ball. Hold for about three seconds. Quickly move to third ball and hold for about three seconds. Say aaammm without pausing between sounds as you touch under each sound. Repeat.)
2. This time I'm going to say the sounds. You touch under each sound as I say it. Put your finger on the first ball. Get ready. aaammm. (Hold each sound for about three seconds. Do not pause between sounds. Child touches under each sound as soon as you start to say it.)
3. Again, finger on the first ball. Get ready. aaammm. (Repeat until firm.)

(To correct: Hold child's finger and move it to appropriate balls on arrow as you say aaammm. Then repeat.)

