

NOTE TO PARENTS AND TEACHERS

The exercises in this book are for beginning readers or for older children who need help with their reading. They are for teaching “Johnny,” but of course the book is meant for boys *and* girls.

Start with the Sounds of the Letters

Start with the sounds of the letters on the first five pages. The sound to be learned is always the beginning sound of the two words pictured. Teach Johnny to make the sound when you point to the letter and to point to the letter or write the letter when you make the sound.

Take as much time as seems necessary for this preliminary work; you may well spend several weeks at it if Johnny is a beginning reader. Even if he is older, don’t simply assume that he knows these sounds; check and make sure. Be patient: it will pay off later on. Don’t aim for perfection. Rather, make sure Johnny realizes that letters stand for sounds and is reasonably good at connecting the right sound with the right letter.

Then, and only then, start Exercise 1.

Let Johnny Sound Out the Words

Whenever Johnny is stumped by a word in the exercises, let him work it out for himself. Tell him to sound out the word. If he can’t, let him look up the letter that is puzzling him on the chart in the back and refresh his memory of its sound by naming the two pictures aloud. Let him do this as often as necessary until he is perfectly sure of the sound of the letter, or letters.

Explain about Small Letters and Capitals

Explain to Johnny carefully that there is a small letter and a capital letter for each sound. However, concentrate on the small letters first. Difficulties with capital letters can be straightened out later.

Teach Writing and Spelling as well as Reading

Use the exercises to teach writing and spelling as well as reading. You will probably be tempted to go ahead with the reading and slight the writing and spelling. Try to resist that temptation. Ideally, Johnny should learn to read and write each of the exercise words at the same time. Let him write each of the words from dictation. It is well worth taking the extra time.

Repeat, Repeat, Repeat

There is a large amount of repetition in the exercises, and 22 of the 72 exercises are reviews. However, that does not mean that doing each exercise once is enough. Do each one of them until Johnny can read and write each word in it without the slightest hesitation. When you have done all the words horizontally, from left to right, do them vertically. Do them from right to left. Do them from the bottom up, diagonally, and picking words here and there, at random. Make as sure as you can that Johnny can really read all the words.

Don't Skip or Jump

Do the exercises in the exact order in which they are printed. Otherwise you will defeat your purpose.

Don't Let Johnny Guess

Watch out for signs of word guessing. Whenever Johnny does any guessing, insist that he sound out the word and, if necessary, look up the letter sounds on the chart in the back.

Things You Should Explain to Johnny

Some of the exercises will profit from a little explanation beforehand. Here are a few simple points to tell Johnny:

Before you do Exercise 10 with him, explain to him that before *a*, *o* and *u* the sound of *k* is spelled *c*, but before *e* and *i* it is spelled *k*. After a short vowel it is usually spelled *ck*.

Before Exercise 14, explain to Johnny the rule about the letter *s* at the end of a word: After the consonants *f*, *k*, *p*, and *t*, it stands for the hissing *ss* sound, but after all other sounds it stands for the *z* sound.

Before Exercise 21, explain to Johnny that the sound of *ch* is usually spelled *ch* at the beginning of a word and *tch* at the end.

Before Exercise 24, tell Johnny that there are words that sound alike but are spelled differently, like *meet* and *meat*, *seem* and *seam*, or *week* and *weak*. Point out to him that they have different meanings.

Before Exercise 30, explain to Johnny that the *oi* sound is usually spelled *oi* inside a word and *oy* at the end.

Before Exercise 31, explain to him that it is usually *ou* inside a word and *ow* at the end.

Before Exercise 32, tell him that the *au* sound is usually spelled *au* in the middle and *aw* at the end.

Before Exercise 40, explain to Johnny about the “*silent e*” at the end of a word, which means that the *a* should be sounded with its “long vowel” sound rather than its “short vowel” sound. Be sure he fully understands the switch from *cap* to *cape*, *mad* to *made*, *hat* to *hate*. This is very important, since here for the first time Johnny learns that a letter can have two different sounds. (Probably Johnny will by now have learned to recite the ABC. If so, tell him that the silent *e* “makes the letter say its name.”)

Before Exercise 48, explain to Johnny that *ing* works just like the silent *e* in changing a short vowel into a long vowel. To keep the vowel short in such *ing* words, the final consonant must be doubled before adding the *ing*, as in *hopping*, *filling*, and *drumming*.

Before Exercise 49, explain to Johnny that the double-consonant rule applies also to final *y*, as in *nutty*, *sunny*, and *foggy*. Explain to him also that the plural of *lady* is spelled *ladies*, of *body*, *bodies*, and so on. Tell him also about *lazy*, *lazier*, *laziest*, and *lazily*.

Before Exercise 51, remind him again of the double-consonant rule and point out to him the difference between *robed* and *robbed*, *filed* and *filled*.

Before Exercise 53, show Johnny that the double-consonant rule applies also to final *er* and *le*, as in *rubber*, *trigger*, *settle*, and *middle*.

When Should Johnny Start to Read?

Johnny should not read anything else until he has done about 50 of the 72 exercises. After that point, he may start to read stories and other reading matter that interests him. Be sure, however, to let him read these stories aloud to you, so that you can correct mistakes. Let him sound out words and stop him from word guessing.

Don't let him sound out irregularly spelled words, such as *do, where, sure, woman, said, friend*, and so on. Whenever such a word occurs, tell him immediately what it means and explain that it does not follow the rules. In this way, he will gradually learn the irregularly spelled words without being confused about the phonetic rules he has learned.

Give Johnny only reading matter that really interests him, such as fairy tales, if he is a small child, or adventure stories, if he is an older boy. The most important thing he should learn is that reading is fun.

From Rudolf Flesch's *Teaching Johnny to Read* published by Grosset & Dunlap, Inc., 1956.

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This Internet Edition is published in the interest of assisting parents and teachers who are using the 72 Phonics Reading Exercises in Flesch's *Why Johnny Can't Read and what you can do about it* (1955). More information on Flesch's method and other effective phonics reading programs is available for free download on the Education Page of the www.donpotter.net web site.

The advantages of having an entire system of phonics in a single book are enormous. For one thing, the parent and teacher know exactly how many pages the students have mastered and how many there are to go. When the student has finished the book, they know how to read.

I have an entire page dedicated to Flesch's Phonics-First Reading Method.

http://donpotter.net/education_pages/flesch_audio.html