

Learning to Look at Print: Early Lessons

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How important is this Learning to Look
at Print task?

How can we understand *sooner* what it means for a child to learn how to look at print?

*The child must learn to attend to some features of print,
the child must learn to follow rules about direction,
the child must attend to words in a line in sequence, and
the child must attend to letters in a word left to right in sequence.*

Attending in a L-R sequence when reading
English is not something already
programmed in the brain.

It must be learned.

Speedy access to visual information in print is of the greatest importance in literacy learning. As you begin to engage learners with the earliest literacy tasks their fast visual perception of forms is building up a *network of links of what is seen to what is heard*, that is, the sounds of language. Teaching at this early stage provides the foundation for later progress.

Clay, 2005

How do we know if a child is looking at
print?

- (examples)

When should this learning to look at
print begin?

Reading begins with looking and ends
when you stop looking.

Clay, 2005

The goal of teaching is to assist the child to construct effective networks in his brain for linking up all the strategic activity that will be needed to work on texts, not merely to accumulate item knowledge.

Clay, 2005

(example)

How is learning to look at print promoted/supported?

- (Roaming clip)

The Observation Survey will have shown up some of the things that the child can do, and if you share tasks and ask him to participate when you are sure he will be successful, you can engage in some new activities that will catch his attention.

If you have caught the child's attention
he will, of course, notice, learn from,
and soon want to engage in, some of
the things he sees you do!

Hold his interest, bolster his confidence, make him your co-worker. Get the responding fluent and habituated, but even at this stage encourage flexibility, using the same knowledge in different ways.

If difficulty in looking at print is discovered during OS and RAK, it is important to address this immediately. Check the child's ability to point to a line of items.

Clay, 2005

(clip of Samantha)

What will make learning to look at print easier for those students who show no evidence of looking during OS and roaming?

Make it easy using clear, easy
memorable teaching giving
appropriate amount of support.

Clay, 2005

(examples)

- “Show me the word ‘can’ you know.”
- “Find a word you know and read it.”
- “What is this word?”

- (example)

- The concept of a word in text
- The ability to point word by word while reading

Having the eyes pick up the visual information from left to right across a word should be matched up with saying the word from the first through to the last sound.

Our next task is to think about learning to look at print and the support we can give throughout the lesson components for those who seem to be having great difficulty with looking at print.

Familiar Reading

Children like to locate things in the print of their favorite books.

Clay, 2005

- (example)

Running Record Book

A few children take a passive approach to print. They need a teacher who prompts them to explore print, and make their brains search the page for signals that they can locate, use, and recognize another time.

(example)

The early reader has to slow down while he learns to make detailed distinctions and then speed up again to fast processing that includes all the new details he has learned. How to pay attention to detail in a slow, careful manner is learned from the teacher, but as soon as the detail is easily recognized the teacher should lead the learner back to fast processing. Too often teacher practice perpetuates slow processing. Readers do need to analyze and solve problems but they also have to work fast.

Clay, 2005

Letter Work, Breaking, Word Work and Analysis

Should take little time. The child cannot afford to waste time on letter-learning activities or games when he could be reading well-chosen books.

(example)

Writing

Stress fluency from the beginning, and encourage him to write something he knows more quickly.

(example)

Cut-up Story

The cut-up story calls for the rehearsal of whatever the child is currently learning about letters, words and sentences.

The focus is on the assembling processes of composing and constructing rather than on the breaking down processes usually associated with writing. It says to the child 'Get your act together. Think of everything at once, and get it all sequenced as quickly as you can.'

The efficiency with which children can do this shows degrees of fluency and flexibility and speed of decision-making, all of which should be valued.

(example)

New Text

In the last ten minutes of the lesson when the teacher introduces the new book, most of the neural networks the child will need to use when problem-solving text will have already been alerted, activated by preceding tasks.

- Take the 'bugs' out of the text before he tries to read it.
- New book is not a test.
- The teacher must plan for the child to have in his head the ideas and the language he needs to complete the reading.

Early lessons – get the child to point to each word with the index finger to achieve crisp word-by-word integration of point-say-look behaviors. Discard the finger as soon as such control has been established.

The teacher's prompt and other responses during the reading have two aims:

- To improve the processing of information on continuous texts (the orchestration of efficient reading, and pulling together of everything you know)
- To support the continued expansion of the processing system itself to cope with more features of language.

Give thoughtful attention to the level of help the child needs and decide when you are prompting for processing or when you should be supplying information that the learner does not have (teaching).

Make an excellent choice of a book, ensure that the challenge matches the child's learning needs, and avoid unnecessary interruptions of the flow of the story-reading by making too many links to other things.

Clay, 2005

- (example)

After the first reading:

- There should be only a few things to discuss if the book was chosen carefully to suit the child's current competencies;
- The teacher should select *only one or two points* and teach with an economical use of words and examples;
- And the kinds of things she would attend to would change over time.

Next day, what you did after the reading should be easy for the child to remember during the second reading of the new book.

Check on the things you have recently emphasized like making sense, or noticing errors, or monitoring carefully, or cross-checking, or using visual information. Also check things like visual searching or attempting to use features like 's', '-ed', '-ing'.

Early in lessons:

Teach after the reading of the book has been completed *and teach not only on errors but also on successful solving*. Quickly check words, phrasing or language features that were teaching points for this book. Use a masking card if that helps to isolate a word swiftly.

Clay, 2005

The visual attention to print increases.

Gradually the child pays more attention to fine detail and becomes sensitive to minor differences in clusters of letters. (learning to write contributes to this also.) And the recognition of distinguishing features becomes faster and faster as the learner has more encounters with print. Psychologists refer to this fast pick-up of information by the eyes as visual perception. *Capture the child's attention, notice what the child is aware of, give clear demonstrations, and encourage fast recognition.*

Clay, 2005