

Reading Readiness for Visual-Spatial Learners

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Visual-spatial children master reading in a different manner from auditory-sequential children. Some VSLs have a difficult time learning to read, while others seem to magically absorb the entire process before they enter school. Perhaps the key here is “before they enter school.” Methods used for teaching reading in school may not work for VSLs. Because relationship is so important to their learning, perhaps part of their reading instruction should be done in the safe atmosphere of home—maybe with the help of grandparents. Here are some suggestions that can set the stage for your child to become a better reader. These ideas will help all young children to fall in love with books.

- Read to your children as often as possible. Read anything and everything, not just children’s books. Continue reading aloud as a family even when your children are reading independently. (My husband and I read the Harry Potter series aloud to each other even now. Great fun!)
- Put your finger under the word you are reading, so that they see the connection between the written word and the word you are saying. Then, when they are ready, have them do the same.
- Encourage your child to memorize stories or books, especially those with repetitious phrases (e.g., *Green Eggs and Ham* and other Dr. Seuss books).
- Promote awareness of printed words. Point out words in the neighborhood, such as stop signs, road signs, street names, names of stores, names on boxes and cans in the grocery store. Read the names of favorite cereals at home, and point to words in television ads.
- Have a time for reading in your home, when the television is off, and everyone reads silently.
- Tell stories to your children. Have round robin stories, where you start the story and each of your children or their friends continue it at an interesting part and then pass it on to the next person. My mother used to ask us for three things: (1) something that grows in the ground; (2) something manmade; and (3) a person or animal. Then she would weave together a story about the three things we named. (She said that I should be sure to tell you the idea wasn’t original, but she can’t remember where it came from.)
- Create books with photographs of their favorite people and pets, with the name written under each picture.

- Cut pictures of objects out of magazines and write the names of the objects under the pictures. These can be made into posters for your child's room or into little picture books.
- Have your child draw a picture, then dictate to you a caption, sentence, or story about the picture. Write his or her ideas in large letters by hand or on the computer. Decorate the house with these picture stories. Start with just a few words, as fewer words are easier to read.
- Borrow books without words from the children's section of your local library (there are tons of them), and have your child tell the story from the pictures. Record your child's stories on the tape recorder, then transcribe them on the computer in large print.
- Read children's books that have repeated passages, such as *Chicken Soup with Rice*, by Maurice Sendak, and have your child fill in the repeated word, then the repeated phrase.
- Buy rhythmic, rhyming books with tapes, and have your child follow along in the book, while listening to the tape.
- *Jumpstart Reading* and *Interactive Reading Journey* are good computer programs for early readers.
- Borrow or buy extra large books with very large print. These were developed for classroom use with large groups, but they are fun for beginning readers as well.
- There are tiny refrigerator magnets of words that can be made into silly sentences. Find or make large-sized words and take turns seeing who can make a sentence with the longest number of words.
- Get books on tape and listen to them in the car.

The crucial factor in being your child's teacher is *having fun*. If you aren't having fun or your child's not having fun, stop. Make a game out of every learning activity, and don't be attached to the outcome. It's the process that counts, and the enjoyment of being together. Don't compromise that enjoyment by setting achievement goals.

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