

The Rhyming Reader

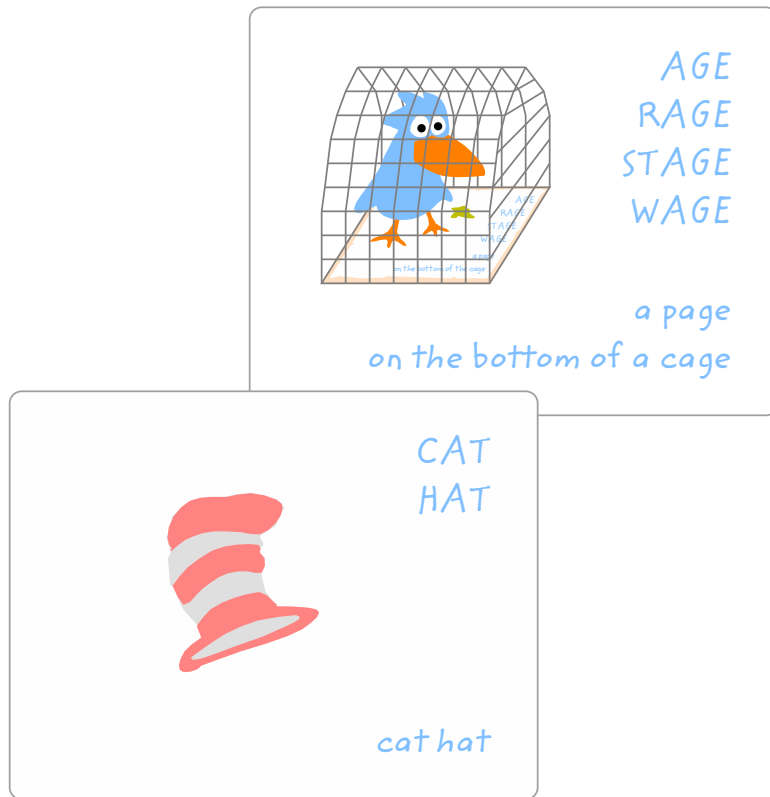
Frequently Asked Questions



help@rhymingreader.com
Copyright © 2011 The Rzeppa Family

How does it work?

Very well. It's simple and painless and remarkably effective. But that's probably not what you're asking. The course is a collection of pages like these:



You print off a few pages each day. Just one or two at first, perhaps a half-dozen or so once you get going. Then you do three things with your kid:

1. You help your little one sound out all the words on the page. You may remind the kid about the sounds individual letters and groups of letters represent, but you must not say any of the words: that's the kid's job. This should take about five minutes.
2. You put your child in a quiet place and have him trace all the words on the pages. Alone. This allows the kid to digest the material in his own way and at his own pace. And it helps develop his fine-motor skills. This takes about ten minutes; a bit longer with incorrigible daydreamers.
3. You get back together and have the kid sound out all the words again. Another five minutes. If his tracing is acceptable and you're impressed with his reading, you move on to new pages the next day. If he's having difficulty, you repeat the troublesome pages the next time.

And that's all there is to it, except for a quick daily review of the previous day's pages. Do this for six or nine months and your kid will be reading anything and everything that comes his way.

What approach does your course use?

The Rhyming Reader is an illustrated combination of the exceptionally successful methods advocated by Dr. Rudolf Flesch (who wrote "Why Johnny Can't Read") and Dr. Leonard Bloomfield ("Let's Read").

Like Bloomfield but unlike Flesch, we focus on word families that share common spellings. Like Flesch but unlike Bloomfield, we encourage letter-by-letter phonics when learning new combos. Like both of these experts - and unlike most other reading courses - we insist on taking the kid from the known to the unknown: from the sounds he knows to the letters and letter combinations he doesn't. We say, in essence, "The sound you hear in the middle of CHEAP is spelled EA" rather than "EA makes the long-E sound". It's a subtle difference, but it's critical. It's easy for the kid to hang letters and letter combos on the sound hooks he's already got in his brain; it's difficult for him to create new letter hooks to hang sounds on.

Unlike both Flesch and Bloomfield, we believe that colorful illustrations can help a kid learn and can help him maintain his interest in the subject. So we've put interesting and/or humorous cartoons on every page.

Why the emphasis on rhyming?

First, because rhyming is not only natural, but is pleasurable to humans. Since people learn and remember best when they're "feeling good", rhyming helps to provide the proper environment for growth.

Secondly, because words that rhyme usually contain the same ending letter patterns. By presenting the kid with collections of such words, we encourage his brain to see more than just individual letters. Unrelated words like CAT/GOT/HUG, for example, force the kid to employ letter-by-letter parsing. But repeated exposure to word families like CAT/RAT/BAT promotes the development of a multi-letter parser in his head, and it will thus become natural for him to see, and read, letter groups (as all good readers do).

Thirdly, because the child who can spot letter combos at a glance will have no trouble reading compound and other multi-syllable words of any length. He will quickly master prefixes and suffixes (like UN and ING) and will be reading independently sooner.

The rhyming approach is the quickest and most enjoyable way to properly program the brain to read.

How do you handle sight-words?

Actually, every word in written English can be sounded out once the various letter combos are learned. ELEPHANT, for example, is easy to read if your kid knows that PH makes a sound like F.

It is, nevertheless, helpful to simply pound certain frequently-occurring words into the little guy's head. We do this in three ways.

1. We always show "sight words" in a familiar context: either as a member of a rhyming group, or in a phrase where the kid is used to hearing it. We never, for example, expose the kid to the word OF in isolation; instead, we put it in a word family with LOVE and DOVE, and in phrases like A HERD OF NERDS.
2. We put simplified phonetic spellings under difficult words to help the kid both sound them out and remember them. WUZ, for example, appears in small gray letters under the first dozen instances of WAS.
3. We repeat certain common words many times throughout the materials. The word AND, for instance, appears over 100 times in our materials.

Do you cover the Dolch and Fry lists?

Yes. Our materials explicitly include 211 of the 220 Dolch words, and 667 of the Fry 1000. We implicitly cover all the rest: if your kid can read SINK and DRINK, he won't have any trouble with INK. We also cover more than 2400 important words that Dolch and Fry overlook (3069 distinct words altogether).

Keep in mind that memorizing words is not the same thing as reading. Reading is a process that takes place in the left side of the brain and can be greatly inhibited by too much rote memorization of words using right-brain faculties. And there are too many words to memorize, anyway.

Our course "programs" the left side of your kid's brain to read properly, and to read anything that he might later come across. The one word of Fry's 1st Hundred that doesn't appear in our pages, for example, is NUMBER. But the kid who completes our course will have no trouble when he eventually stumbles upon it because he's mastered the individual N and B sounds, and the UM and ER combos, in a variety of contexts. He will simply see NUM and BER and will fluently read NUMBER without consciously thinking about it.

Why are there so many books?

First, because learning to read is not a trivial thing. Only humans, angels, and God can do it.

Secondly, because we want your kid to actually know HOW to read, anything and everything - not just words memorized from lists. To do that, we have to be complete. We have to cover all of the different sounds in the English language, and all of the various spellings of each. And we have to give the kid enough practice with each spelling of each sound so he will remember what he's learned.

Thirdly, we wanted to provide convenient points for taking breaks. If all our lessons were in one huge book you'd probably feel like you weren't making progress. So every hundred pages or so you and your little one can stop, reflect on your joint accomplishments, and go out to Chuck E Cheese for a pizza.

Besides, it's not as bad as you think. The entire course consists of about 750 pages. If you help your kid with just two or three pages a day, he'll be reading - really reading, anything and everything - in less than a year. Slow and steady wins this race every time.

How old should a kid be to begin reading?

If your kid can speak plainly, and can trace a circle the size of a dime, he's ready for our course.

Before using our materials, however, make sure your kid can recognize and name all of the letters of the alphabet, both uppercase and lowercase. If he knows the usual sounds they make, great, but that's not necessary - you can teach him the sounds as you make your way through the materials. In fact, he'll probably learn them more quickly that way.

How many people have used this course?

You're the first one. Just kidding! We've used this particular version on our own kid, and the Flesch and Bloomfield methods upon which we've based this course have been used successfully for decades with hundreds of thousands of kids.

The only things really novel about our course are the clever illustrations, the handful-of-pages-a-day schedule, and the you-print-it-so-your-kid-can-write-on-it delivery format that makes it unusually affordable. Everything else is tried and true.

Why does my kid have to trace so many words and sentences?

Our course requires each student to:

- (1) sound out each word on each page with his parent;
- (2) go off by himself and trace all the words; and
- (3) read all the traced words back to his parent.

This approach accomplishes three things.

First, it lets the kid learn by imitation rather than re-invention of the wheel. We don't expect the little guy to "figure out" how to read: we're going to tell him. All he has to do is follow along. But repetition, fortunately or unfortunately, is what programs the brain. So repeat we must. So repeat we must.

Secondly, this method encourages rapid progress. The more senses a kid uses while learning something, the better he will learn it. So he sees the words with his eyes, says them with his mouth, hears them with his ears, and feels them with his writing hand. If there was some way we could get the smell of the ink to contribute, we would.

Thirdly, and most importantly, are the psychological aspects of the method:

(a) Working with a parent, on a challenging but enjoyable task, on a regular daily basis, is a great bonding experience. Your child will not only learn to read, but will learn to look forward to this quality time together with you. And he will esteem you all the more highly as the days go by since you will have the opportunity, again and again, to impress him with your mastery of written English.

(b) Working by himself (tracing the words) allows the kid to digest the material in his own way and at his own pace. It also helps develop his fine motor skills. And the whole time he'll be looking forward to...

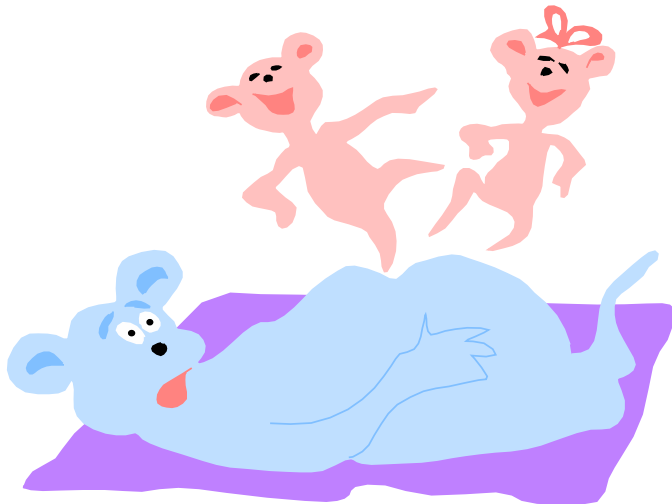
(c) Presenting his finished work to his parent, and demonstrating improved reading skills when he sounds out the page again. This gives the kid a definite sense of accomplishment and the incomparable warm-tummy feeling that comes with parental approval.

All that, mind you, in just twenty minutes a day. So give your little one a gift he'll use the rest of his life, and let him always associate that gift with you.

Does it use up a lot of ink?

No. Most of the text and all of our pictures were designed using special hues that minimize ink usage. You should be able to print the whole course once with a single set of high-yield cartridges (depending, of course, on your printer).

Save the completed pages for review. And let them pile up in the kid's room. A ream-and-a-half of printed paper makes an impressive stack and will make your kid feel like he's really accomplished something.



What about supplementary reading?

Try to get through Book Three before you start your kid on other materials. After that, we recommend any of Dr. Seuss' stuff, starting with these:

1. Hop on Pop
2. Mr. Brown Can Moo
3. Green Eggs and Ham
4. Ten Apples Up on Top
5. The Foot Book
6. One Fish, Two Fish
7. There's a Wocket in my Pocket
8. The Cat in the Hat

The BOB books by Bobby & John Maslen are also good.

Our favorite Bible for beginning readers is "The Rhyme Bible for Toddlers" by L. J. Sattgast (with lovely watercolor illustrations by Toni Goffe).

The "Fun with Phonics" book series by Sue Graves.

And for some clever little worksheets that fold up into mini-books, try Scholastic's "Read & Write Mini-Books That Teach Word Families."