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www.BooksKidsLove.com/yourbabycanread.htm

1. Why should parents teach their babies to read?

It's easier to learn language skills at a higher level earlier in life than it is later in life. Babies and toddlers learn to understand language and speak naturally simply by listening to language. When babies hear a second language, they learn to understand and speak the language naturally without an effort if they hear the language frequently enough. If babies are allowed to see the language, they can also learn written language just as naturally. We would never imagine waiting until age 5 or 6 to speak to children and I believe if we looked at the written form of language in the same way as we do the spoken form, we would not wait until age 5 or 6 to allow children to see our language.

Early in life, children learn the patterns of language more easily than they do later in life. In other words, children figure out to add an 's' onto words to make them plural or an 'ed' onto words to make them past tense. They learn this by listening to language. We know that they learn the patterns of language because they sometimes apply the patterns to words that don't follow the pattern. In other words, the child may say "I goed over there." instead of "I went over there." because they learned the pattern of adding an 'ed' onto words to make them past tense. They learn this simply by listening to language.

When people learn English later in life, they learn by rules instead of easily figuring out the patterns of the language. If babies and toddlers are allowed to see the language at the same time they hear the language, they can learn the patterns of the written language (phonics) just as naturally and easily. Generally, when people learn the patterns of language early in life they learn the language at a higher level than people who learn by rules later in life. We currently wait until more than 90% of the brain is developed (around age five or six) to teach reading. By that age, learning to read becomes a difficult skill that is learned by rules (instead of learned naturally by seeing the language and figuring out its patterns).

Reading is fun for babies and toddlers. Some of my best memories are listening to my young children read to me. Reading to your child is a fun, positive activity; however, reading to young children doesn't teach them to read. A recent study in *Psychological Science* (Nov., 2005) shows that the average preschooler spends about 5 seconds focusing on looking at the words when parents are reading to them. The rest of the time was spent looking at the pictures. The authors of the study said that parents should not expect that reading to their children will teach them to read. I recommend two types of reading to children – one to teach reading and one where you simply read for the love or joy of reading and not trying to teach reading. It is easy to turn the typical "read to the child" experience into a "fun, learning to read" experience once your child learns to read a few dozen words. [More info. on this topic is available on the *Parent Segment* of the *Your Baby Can Read* DVDs and on the "Tips" page of this website.]

There is a natural window of opportunity for learning language where it is easier to learn language at a higher level. Reading is the most important skill a child learns. Reading helps children succeed in school and in life. The earlier a child is taught to read, the better the child reads – even when you control for IQ and socio-economic status. This effect does not go away after a few years. In longitudinal studies children who were taught to read earlier stayed ahead of their same-IQ, same socio-economic status peers who were taught later. The children who were taught later never caught up to their peers.

Baby brains develop faster than older children's brains. There are tens of thousands of new connections forming every second in a baby's brain. If the child is watching an entertainment-based DVD or TV show, many of those connections will not be used again. According to theories of brain development, many of the connections formed while babies are watching the Your Baby Can Read (YBCR) videos should help the child have a better understanding of language with useful connections. For example, if the child sees the word "waving" in the YBCR video, there should be connections formed from the visual cortex (because the child is looking at the word) to the auditory cortex (because the child is listening to the word) to the somatosensory cortex (because the child waves) to Broca's area for speech (because the child says the word) to the areas of the brain related to the meaning of the word (because we explain the meaning of each word). Additionally, there should be connections among all of these areas in the baby's brain. Since there is more neuroplasticity (the ability of the brain to change or modify based on the environment) early in life, it is possible the brain will develop more efficiently for reading so the child could read as naturally as the child understands spoken language.

The current methods and ages are not working for millions of children. Forty percent of 8-year-old Americans cannot read independently. If a child cannot read at grade level at the end of first grade, fewer than one in eight ever catch up to read at grade level according to the *APA Monitor*. In some U.S. states, over half of the children are reading below grade level. According to a national panel of reading specialists and early childhood educators, most of our nation's reading problems could be eliminated if we started teaching reading earlier and if we did a combination of phonics and whole language (instead of only one or the other). We do both of those with our videos.

Better readers are more likely to stay in school and to do well in school. Poorer readers are more likely to drop out of school or do poorly in school. Children who know how to read before they enter school have higher self-esteem than other children. The window of opportunity for learning language begins to close by age four. We know that it is easier to learn language skills at a high level earlier in life and increasing difficult to learn at a high level as we get older. About 90% of the brain is developed by age 5, then we begin to teach reading. Maybe the correct question is "Why would we wait to teach reading when the most natural time to learn language is during the infant and toddler years?"

2. What are these videos about?

These videos allow the children to see the language at the same time they hear the language in a fun, interactive way. The videos use animals, other young children, and songs that are interesting to young children. The main idea behind the Your Baby Can Read system is that we try to help the children develop an association between the written words, their sounds, and their meanings. Over time, the babies figure out enough of these associations so that they learn the sounds that the letters make. [Please read the question and answer about phonics for more information on how we teach phonics.]

We also have a 10-minute *Parent Segment* on each DVD explaining how to use the set.

3. How does it work?

Basically, we use an interactive and multi-sensory approach. The children are allowed to see the words at the same time that they hear the words. Since children learn language faster and easier during infancy than any other time, we take advantage of this window of opportunity to learn

written language as well as spoken language. So, the infants are able to see and hear words instead of simply hearing the words. Additionally, we encourage the babies to participate by saying the words and by doing physical actions that help the children learn the meanings of the words. We encourage the babies and toddlers to clap, wave, point, touch body parts, and so on. This kind of interactive, multi-sensory learning has been shown to be superior to simply presenting the information in one sensory modality and it is more fun!

4. Does your video series teach phonics?

Yes. We specifically teach phonics as well as whole words. We have sections of the videos that teach phonics. Many infants have learned to read phonetically at very advanced levels with this system because they picked up the patterns of the written language all by themselves. Remember, infants and toddlers naturally learn the patterns of our spoken language by listening to people talk. Three-year-old children may say, "I swam yesterday." instead of "I swam yesterday." because they figure out the pattern of adding an "ed" onto words to make them past tense. Young children who watch our videos may learn the patterns of the written language or phonics after they learn to read several dozen words. This happens because after they learn to read many words, they will pick up the patterns of the language. In other words, they will learn to recognize that words beginning with the letter "d" make the 'd' sound after they learn some words that begin with the letter "d".

5. Why should parents have their babies watch educational videos instead of watching entertainment-based programs?

Time, Newsweek, and many other magazines have had in-depth reports on infant brain development. Most conclude the same thing – there is a window of opportunity for stimulating infants' brains when babies' and toddlers' brains are developing very rapidly. Babies and toddlers have tens of thousands of new connections forming in their brains each second. According to theories of brain development, young children who see the language at the same time they hear the language, see and hear about the meaning of each word, and do physical actions related to the words should have many new synapses connecting the visual cortex with the auditory cortex, somatosensory cortex, and other language areas of the brain. These connections are far more likely to have a lasting value than watching other baby videos. (For instance, in some very popular baby videos, babies watch colorful bubbles floating around while listening to unrelated sounds. During a half-hour video, babies have millions of new connections forming in their brains – most of them are not useful when they are watching most TV shows or videos that have only a small educational component. Over time, these connections form the actual physical structure of your child's brain so it is extremely important which videos that you allow your child to watch.) Additionally, there are longitudinal studies showing positive effects of early stimulation, including higher IQs. The last two U.S. Presidents have encouraged parents to begin teaching their infants from birth, including reading to their infants. At the very least, the evidence suggests that stimulating your infant will lead to more useful synaptic connections in the brain which could provide a foundation for future learning. Our videos could also lead to early independent reading which would open up numerous opportunities for accelerated learning in other areas. On a personal note, this is what has happened with my daughters. The ability to read early allowed them to learn about numerous topics easily. For instance, at age 3, Aleka became very interested in dinosaurs. She read more than 200 books on dinosaurs in a couple of months because she was so interested in dinosaurs. At age three, she understood different theories on why dinosaurs became extinct which demonstrated her high reading comprehension. Many of the babies who

have learned to read from our videos are advanced in other areas as well (including expressive language, spelling, music, science, geography, and math). Many of the parents report that watching the *Your Baby Can Read* videos helped the child's brain development and ability to learn in general.

6. Will older children benefit from the videos?

Yes. There are long-term studies showing the earlier the child is taught to read, the better the child reads – even when IQ and socio-economic factors were controlled. The children who were taught to read earlier read better than the children who were taught later – even after many years indicating that it is similar to learning a second language where it is easier to learn at a high level early in life than it is later in life. We have had many children who are five or six years old who learned to read using our videos. Often, children who are age four or older will go through the videos at a faster pace than babies and toddlers. This is explained on the Parent Segment of each of the DVDs.

7. Do children like watching your videos?

In general, babies love watching our videos. We have many hundreds of comments from parents saying that their children prefer our DVDs over *Dora the Explorer*, *Blues Clues*, or other entertainment-based programs with little educational value. Our videos are interactive which makes them more fun for babies, toddlers, and preschoolers. We also have songs, poems, animals, and children in the video. Everything is presented in a fun and interesting manner so most children love the videos. Additionally, parents don't need to feel guilty using these videos because they know that the child is actually learning useful language abilities rather than simply being occupied by a TV show while the parents are busy.

If your child is not watching the videos you could try the following strategies. Make sure that your baby is in an upright position, close enough to see the television screen, and comfortable. You may want to have your infant seated on your lap and gently encourage your baby to participate in the activities presented in the video. Depending on the age of your child, you may want to have your baby seated in a highchair and feed your child while she or he is watching. We strongly recommend that you cut down on the amount of TV that your child watches so that when you put the reading video on, it will be a more novel activity. Sometimes, it helps to have the child watch the videos early in the morning, before or after a nap, or after physical activity. We also suggest that you remove distractions from the room before watching the DVDs. Many parents only use our videos in the car so that the child can benefit from riding in the car.

8. How long do you recommend that infants watch the video?

That depends on many factors -- how many words the baby already knows, the baby's interest in learning new words, the baby's age, and so on. Beginning readers should watch about two times a day or about one hour per day. Remember, this is instead of watching other TV shows or videos that generally have little educational value. Your child can watch while riding in the car or while you are busy around the house so that watching the videos will not take time away from other important activities.