

METHODS OF TEACHING READING

A method is a procedure, a classroom strategy, an ordered sequence of techniques. It is about 'HOW' the teaching is to be conducted. It can be described in terms such as "first you do this, and then do this ...". Methods tend to be primarily concerned with the roles of the teacher and students; and secondarily, with linguistic and subject-matter objectives, sequencing materials and activities.

Methods of Teaching Reading	
Method	Concept
Alphabet method or ABC method or Spelling method	Alphabets or letters are taught initially followed with words, phrases, and sentences and then reading.
Syllable method	Syllables are taught first, followed with words, and sentences and then reading.
The 'Whole-Word' method or 'Look-and-Say' method or 'See and Say' method or Global method (1940)	Starts with a word. Content and / or Structural words are used followed with letters and sentences; and then reading
Phrase method	Audio visual aids are used. Stands between word and sentence method. Phrases are group of words which convey meaning. Phrases are caught in one eye fixation. Phrases are used for teaching followed with sentences and then reading.
Sentence method (1881)	Sentence is the unit of teaching. Direct sentences are used for teaching followed with words and letters; and then reading.
Phonetic method or Phonic method	Starts from sounds followed with letters and then reading.
Story method	Four to five simple sentences are used to frame or write stories and then reading. Children prefer this method.

Objectives of Alphabet Method

The basic objective of teaching reading with alphabet method is to give significance to 'recognition' of new letters rather 'meaning'. The intention is to enable the learner to 'differentiate' the letters. The focus is on implementing sufficient drill exercises to recognize and pronounce the alphabets.

Concept of Alphabetic Method

Individual alphabets or letters are taught initially followed with words, phrases, and sentences. This is followed with full fledged reading. Importance is given to identification of the alphabets, rather than their meaning. It is necessary that being able to recite alphabet letters is necessary, a precondition before advancing into reading.

In 1620s, teaching the names of alphabet letters was once considered sufficient to lead children into the reading of words. Flash cards, booklets, and classroom slates were used to teach the letters of the alphabet. However, there was shift in

1800s from alphabet method to use of short sentences with occasional rhyming words which could be used creatively in a variety of teaching styles. Today, a variety of flash cards big and small are available for use by the teachers and parents when teaching the alphabets.

Procedure of Alphabetic Method

Colorful flash cards each with individual alphabets is presented to the learner. The 'form' or 'shape' and the 'name' of the alphabet help to recognize it. This is followed with pronunciation. It is promoted to repeat those alphabets individually or in conjunction with some words. These alphabets are recited, drilled and memorized. It is gradually followed with words, phrases, and sentences and then reading.

An Illustration

- **Letter-Sound Correspondence** : Teacher points to letter /m/ on board. "The sound of this letter is /mmm/. Tell me the sound of this letter." The teacher uses consistent and brief wording.
- **Sounding Out Words** : Teacher points to the word /mop/ on the board, touches under each sound as the students sound it out, and slashes finger under the word as students say it fast. "Sound it out." (/mmm o p/) "Say it fast." (mop). The teacher starts with sound letters/words out in their heads, then as a class produce the word orally.
- **Reading Connected Text** : Once students have mastered CVC (mom) and VC (at) words, short controlled sentences (mom is at home) should be introduced. Prompts and procedures should be used for this, as it is sometimes difficult for students to move quickly from lists of words to passages.

Advantages of Alphabetic Method

This method is helpful for beginners of reading at primary levels. Reciting and drilling of individual alphabets helps to identify and differentiate alphabets.

Limitations of Alphabetic Method

As a method of teaching reading, 'the alphabet method' is no longer promoted. It is considered as a mechanical way of recitation and drilling without paying attention to the meaning. The learner may not understand that the letters are meant to signal sounds that ought to be uttered. It is no longer thought to be a valid way to lead a person into the sounding out of syllables nor does it reveal the phonetic basis for language orthography, which is the basis for a person to read eventually with integrity.

THE WHOLE-WORD METHOD

Concept

The 'Whole-Word' method is also called as 'Look-and-Say' method or 'See and Say' method or Global method (1940).

The 'Whole-Word' method begins with a word. The words may be the content and / or the structural words. The learning of these words is followed with alphabets and sentences, after which the actual reading begins. Plenty of audio visual aids are essential for effective use of this method.

Procedure

To begin with, the learners are expected to look at the general appearance of the words. Based on the 'shape' of the word, they are expected to memorize the sounds that should be spoken. The goal for the learners is to see each word as a little picture and associate the spoken word with the little word-shapes. Various amounts of emphasis may be given to letter-sound relationships, varying from teacher to teacher.

Advantages

Students can see and learn new words from their personal experiences, testimonies, and stories which would motivate them to remember what their words looked like, and they would associate the written words with their own speaking of words.

Limitations

This method is rarely used today because each learner eventually reaches a breakdown point, beyond which new words are rarely memorized. But, to obediently use this method, the instructor is not expected to waste time connecting syllables with sounds. The teachers must select words from interesting reading materials to make them visible and prominent. The ability of learners to memorize the visuals shapes and pronunciation of numerous words varies from to person.

THE SENTENCE METHOD

The main objective of Sentence Method is to focus on the sentences and their meaning.

Concept

Word method is the basis and extension for sentence method. However, the sentence is the unit of teaching. A sentence is the unit of meaning. Sentence is the unit of speech or reading. Moreover, this method runs in reversal to the alphabet method. The method moves from learning sentences to phrases to words to alphabets/ letters.

W. M. Ryburn (1754) is a staunch believer in this method. According to him, a sentence, as such, has a true thought and complete meaning with its distinctive sound. Minimum significance is given to letter names and letter sounds. The context in reference is used for recognizing unfamiliar words and their meaning. Reading material is selected based on children's interest and spoken vocabulary. Continuous reading by this method leads to fluency and rapidity.

This method can be effectively used with exercises like use of jumbled sentences to rearrange them.

Procedure

- As stated earlier, the movement learning reading is from sentence to phrases to words to letters.
- The teacher selects a sentence and reads it.
- The teacher uses simple conversation while teaching.
- The teacher writes sentence on black board and uses flash cards where necessary.

- A small gap of time is given for students to recognize the sentence.
- The teacher reads the sentence again.
- The teacher now asks students to read the same sentence again and again.
- The teacher indicates phrases, reads, and makes students to read phrases.
- The teacher reads words, and asks the students to read words.
- The teacher reads spellings and asks the students to do so.

The sentence method can be adopted in a procedural manner under two levels. They are -

1. Practice Level
2. Concrete Level

1. Practice Level – The order of this level goes from word to sentence and sentence to word. The teaching aids that are used during teaching of this method may be the flash cards or matching devices. Flash cards with single glance on which word / phrase / sentence are written are used. Letter to word shape **clue** is given.

2. Concrete Level – In this level, matching devices using words, 2 pictures of an object / word-picture match; separate word-picture card match; word-word match are used.

A comparative account of the advantages and limitations of the sentence method is given below :

Advantages	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural method, reading, rereading and repeating leads to fluency; skill of reading improves. • Cognitive theory based, a psychological method • Presents word by word meaning. • Teaching by whole part (<i>e.g.</i> sentence) method. • Supports Gestalt psychology – emphasizes on whole. • Develops eye span– nucleus with pre tonic syllables and post tonic syllables. • Helps in self education. • Good reading habit, attitude, accuracy, independence of word recognition seen. • Visual aids help in concrete learning. • Teaching with rhythm, intonation and accent - a combination of all the three improves pronunciation. • Semantics are learnt leading to accuracy in reading. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letters are not taught. • Tedious to teach letters. • Trained teachers required. • Time consuming. • Not economical. • Difficulty to read sentences directly. • Needs structural or graded material. • Language laboratory or OHP needed. • Lot of sentence reading practice is needed.