Author's Notes

The practice illustrated by this story is called

Learning to Read by EAR.

Children who speak recognize spoken language. When you say "book" they understand you. When a child sees the written word "book" and you say the word "book", this is called Aided Reading.

Written words are made up of visual elements. Excluding punctuation, written English is made of 52 elements (26 lower case and 26 upper case letters). When a written word is broken into elements we call this Spelling.

A child who can, while looking at a word on the page, say each letter of the word — or simply point to each letter of the word, or both — can Engage Each Element of a written word (she can spell). This engagement is critical to effective retention for later recognition. Children who engage each letter of unfamiliar words during Aided Reading learn those new words as easily as children who sound-out each unfamiliar word.

EAR stands for Engaged Aided Reading. Learning to Read by EAR is a simple practice for children to learn

unfamiliar words during parent–child paired reading — during read aloud story-time. Whether learning to read by EAR or by sounding out unfamiliar words, most children need four to fourteen time-separated encounters with an unfamiliar word to develop fluency with that word. Children with reading difficulties or who are not very familiar with the letters of the alphabet may require far more encounters, especially if sounding out the unfamiliar word every time.

Engaged Aided Reading is quick and it is far less disruptive to story narratives than is struggling to sound out a word. An EAR practice can supplement traditional instruction. Most elementary educators use a large range of techniques to help children develop fluency. Educators I have interviewed are disappointed that the only support many students receive during take-home reading is encouragement to "sound it out".

During Engaged Aided Reading allow your student to read the words of a story which they are familiar with. When your student reaches an unfamiliar word quickly ask them to simply name each letter. When your student has done so, say the word and ask your student to repeat it. Then move on with the story immediately — don't spend time repeating, rehashing, or regurgitating rules.

My daughter loves books, and always has. She knew all her letters at age 2. At age 3 she attended a very academic preschool where she was taught to sound out words.

At age 4 1/2 she was still not reading anything, not even slowly. We began an EAR practice and she was reading chapter books within months.

GLOSSARY

Phonemes

— alphabetic sounds like 'ah' - 'bh' - 'kh'

Phonemic Awareness

— awareness that spoken words are composed of blended phonemes

Phonemic Decoding

— to "sound out" words

Learning to Read by EAR does not require Phonemic Awareness. Phonemic Awareness is not a prerequisite for learning to use spoken language, because children do not hear and process words as blended phonemes (neither do adults, in conversation). We hear a syllable as a single event, and a sequence of syllables (a phrase) as a rapid sequence of events. Learning to speak is as easy as learning to imitate these event sounds.

Although the elements of written words (letters) can be mapped to the elements of spoken words (phonemes), written words are visual objects. For a fluent reader, 99.99...% of words read are Sight Words. This means that

we recognize them as single objects rather than as sequenced alphabetic sounds. Fluent reading is NOT well-practiced and rapid Phonemic Decoding.

Inside the brain, vision and hearing both are simply electrical impulses. A person can memorize sight words as skillfully and prolifically as he can memorize spoken words. Over time, a child may begin to recognize the common phoneme patterns in spoken words. This is the beginning of phonemic awareness. Similarly, with enough reading the brain begins to recognize the patterns of letters in written words — they can see that 'range' rhymes with 'change', and that 'change' has the same onset as 'chance'.

By reinforcing the phoneme patterns in spoken words with these visual patterns in written words, Learning to Read by EAR can actually accelerate the onset of Phonemic Awareness. Children who have memorized hundreds of sight words before learning Phonemic Decoding will experience less frustration.

All children learn to reproduce blended phonemes when they learn to speak ... — without any phonemic awareness.

CHILDREN are capable of learning to read *without*

PHONEMIC AWARENESS

Written words are made up of **visual elements**

It is ironic that phoneme manipulation is thought by so many to be an essential foundation of reading written words while **spoken words** are **recognized** and **reproduced**

without any thought for the very elements of their construction — Phonemes

Please enjoy this selection from Chapter 1 of my upcoming book,

Read to Me —

"Daddy, read to me."

My daughter stood there, her face full of innocence, her eyes pleading, and her hand holding a familiar book by Dr. Seuss as she waited for me to respond. Ellie was six years old, but precocious; vivacious and articulate; independent, yet a voracious devourer of my attention. For seven years her health and development had been my muse.

"Please daddy, read me a story."

Not now, I thought. *I'm studying. I'm trying to leave my mark on the world. I've set goals. I've got deadlines. I'm working. I'm busy.*

"Why don't you read that to your brother? Dad is busy," seemed like a reasonable answer. So I said it. *Isn't that why I taught her to read,* I thought, *to free myself of reading to her?* Ellie was more than capable of reading the book she held out to me — she had read it at least a dozen times, and she would regularly read books ten times its length in an afternoon — was I wrong?

Reflecting on this taught me that she enjoyed our story as much as she enjoyed the stories on the page. Before she learned to walk, she learned to maneuver her crawling self and a large board book across the room and into my lap.

That predilection is not precisely what I had planned for her. Sure, I wanted her to be literate — but when she was still crawling, in 2009, I had a different curriculum in mind. I'm analytical — I crunch numbers for fun. You see, numbers are the vocabulary of mathematics — mathematics is a language, numbers are words, quantization is thought — and fluency in numbers was the gift I wanted to give her.

To no one's great surprise but my own, Ellie was not interested in my developmental psychology hacks for grokking number theory as a toddler.

She was interested in stories. So, as any good autodidact would do, in the four years from 2009 to 2013 I read up on our theories of how best to teach children to read. Despite her precociousness and her desire, Ellie didn't learn to read without effort. She was easily frustrated with fleeting forays into instruction. But she wanted to read and to be read to with a fiery passion.

I studied and tried practicing with her every method there is for teaching people to read. Nothing seemed to work, perhaps mostly because I refused to impose a les-

son plan on Ellie that caused her frustration, no matter how easy the author claimed it really was. I would not risk smothering her enthusiasm for satisfying my ego. So I spent far more time simply reading to her than practicing any early literacy skills — such as reciting the alphabet, writing letters, identifying letter sounds, & cetera. Then in 2013 we made a breakthrough.

In June 2013 Ellie was reading fewer than 10 words — 3 of which were I, a, and her name. She could not or would not sound out simple CVC words — three letter Consonant-Vowel-Consonant words, such as Cat — though she had been taught how; and not just by me, but by an expensive preschool. If she's able to pick up on it at this age, I thought, she would have done so by now.

In August 2013 she was reading anything her heart desired, at better than 120 words per minute. The catalyst — what made all the difference — was Engaged Aided Reading (EAR), though I would not name it that until four years later.

Watch for updates at — WWW.SARA.AI/READ-TO-ME/

Make Learning Easy

Currently, only 1 in 100 children learn to read with modeling only—without instruction.

And with instruction, 2 in 3 children experience difficulty and frustration that hinders their progress to fluency and threatens their love of literature.

With the right approach, most children can easily learn to read with

simple modeling,

minimal instruction, and

Zero Frustration.

I'm trying to make this approach universally understood and accesible. Please support me by recommending this book to others and supporting me on Patreon.

www.patreon.com/rfugal

Thank you!