



# Homeschool Life Magazine

Homeschooling is more than an academic alternative – it's a way of life!

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## HOW TO TEACH YOUR CHILD TO READ

BY AMBER SEMRAU

The most important part about teaching your child to read is to teach them to read using phonics and help them practice regularly. Any reading program that uses phonics will be fine for the most part. Some might be more fun or efficient than others, but they all should work. This article doesn't cover every great resource that's out there. The purpose of this article is to give you a couple resources that will work very well for most kids. That being said though, don't be afraid to try other resources and to find one that works well for you, your kids and your situation.

### Learn the Alphabet

The first step to reading is to learn the names and sounds of the letters of the alphabet. This can be done with flashcards and alphabet games, but I have found different videos to be effective. The Letter Factory videos by Leap Frog has saved me a lot of time in teaching the alphabet to the other kids! The only downside to that video is that they only show the capital letters, so you will need to make sure your child knows the lower-case letters also, and which lower case letters go with which upper case letters.

### Learn the Vowels

The next thing to do is point out that there are 5 special letters which have at least 2 sounds: long and short. You can sing the names of the vowels to the tune of B-I-N-G-O, just use A-E-I-O-U in place of B-I-N-G-O.

### Learn to Blend the Sounds

Once the kids know the letters and the sounds, they are ready to sound out words. The best way to do this is to say the word backwards, or with the individual sounds being drawn out so the kids can hear the separate sounds running together. Say simple words slowly and then say them quickly. I learned this technique from *How to Teach Your Child to Read to 100 Easy Lessons*.

### Follow Your Reading Curriculum

This is also when I start a formal reading curriculum. My curriculum of choice is *The Ordinary Parent's Guide to*

*Teaching Reading* by Jessie Wise and Sarah Hoffington. The lessons are laid out in a very simple format introducing one new concept plus practice for that concept with each lesson. It starts with the alphabet and then it moves to simple short vowel words, consonant blends, long vowel words, digraphs, etc. all the way through multiple syllable and compound words. There are no pictures, so the kids have to sound out the words. It usually takes us about 2-3 years to finish the book, but the kids are reading on their own by about halfway through. I like going through this book because it is comprehensive and then the kids will at least have familiarity with the different words. Reviews and games are built in also.

### Practice and Patience

Once they can sound out words, it is really just a matter of practice. BOB books are very simple stories which use a lot of 3 letter words. The amount of reading depends on their ability. If they are just starting, it is a 4 page amount. If they have more confidence and have read the book before, then I will have them read more. The idea is to challenge them without overwhelming them.

I included patience in the title, because this stage takes a lot of patience. The kids read very slowly at first and sometimes I wonder if I will make it through. But it's important to be patient, to encourage the kids, praise them when they do well and finish their lesson.

### Early Reading Books

Once the child has mastered Bob books we move on to early readers like *Little Bear*. I will read a page and then have them read a page, until they read fast enough to do it all on their own. The important thing is to just keep on going! By the time we've finished a bunch of early readers, the kids are usually ready for early novels like the Magic Tree House series. I will read a page or paragraph and then have them read a page or paragraph until they are confident readers. As they start to read more and more on their own, I will choose books for them to read that will challenge them a little.

### Be Consistent

Consistency is key. Doing a little bit every day is a lot more effective than trying to do a whole bunch in one day. Eventually these little readers aren't going to need you to sit with them anymore. It is one of those training issues, do it right when they are young and reap the benefits for years to come!

Amber Semrau is a blogger and homeschool mom of eight. She currently lives in France with six while the other two are working on a bachelor degree. When not homeschooling, you will find her writing at [www.amberssemrau.com](http://www.amberssemrau.com) where she shares her experience with homeschooling, parenting, getting the kids to do their chores, and how she keeps it all organized.



## The Kinesthetic Learner

By Veronica Whitley

Energetic. Fidgety. Hands-on. Distracted. Active.

If you hear, or see these words often, you may have a kinesthetic or tactile learner. A kinesthetic learner typically learns best (not only) by doing. These are the children that "just can't sit still." You will often find them pacing, bouncing, tapping, or clicking. Because their learning style incorporates whole body movements, they often seem to be in perpetual motion.

You may also hear kinesthetic learners referred to as tactile learners. While the terms are often used interchangeably, tactile learners are a type of kinesthetic learner. Tactile learners tend to be more hands-on, learning primarily through the sense of touch, and fine motor skills. While not exactly the same, they do have similar preferences, and many of the characteristics, strengths, and strategies will apply to both types of learners.

### Characteristics of the Kinesthetic Learner

While these tendencies and characteristics may be typical of kinesthetic learners, this is not an exhaustive description. Generally, kinesthetic learners:

- are concrete thinkers.

- tend to focus on what is real.
- learn best by doing.
- benefit from trial-and-error.
- value their own experiences.
- often have a natural athletic ability.
- have a hard time sitting still.
- are easily bored, distracted, or restless.
- are active learners, not passive observers.
- often talk with their hands.
- enjoy field trips, labs, or hands-on exhibits.

### Struggles and Strategies for the Kinesthetic Learner

Kinesthetic learners may not fit the mold of the ideal student. They are active learners. They need to move, and use all of their senses in the learning process. But, most educational strategies, methodologies, and content involve passive learning (watching or listening), so this type of setting can be a struggle for these active learners. This is not an excuse for kinesthetic learners to avoid formal or traditional methods of education. There will be situations when they will need to sit quietly and pay attention (for example church services, business meetings, training seminars). Sometimes their need for movement or physical stimuli can be viewed negatively. It may look like boredom, restlessness, or a lack of self-control. But, as their mom, and their teacher, we have a unique opportunity to encourage our kinesthetic learners to adapt to situations where they may struggle, and to incorporate strategies and methods that will allow them to learn successfully.

**Wiggle Worms:** Sitting still is difficult for a kinesthetic learner. But, knowing this can be half the battle. You do not want to allow them to distract your other children, but, homeschooling can also give your kinesthetic learner the freedom to move around. Allow your kinesthetic learner to stand, sit on the floor, or change positions during his lesson. Try putting a resistance band (or tying a length of stretchy fabric) around the front legs of a chair to allow them to move or bounce their feet, without distracting others. Older students may benefit from pacing, bouncing a tennis ball, jumping rope, or shooting baskets while they study or review material for an upcoming test. Your more tactile learners may prefer sketching, or doodling during a lesson, instead of traditional or dualist notetaking. Smaller movements like playing with Silly Putty, play dough, fidget spinners, or squishy (stress-relieving) toys may also help a tactile learner stay focused.

**Sensory Snacks:** Although I make sure that my kids have a good breakfast before we start our school day, someone usually wants a snack only a few lessons in. But, these snacks can make or break the rest of our day. If your kids are feeling a little sluggish, try some alerting foods (chewy, sour, spicy, crunchy, or cold) to help wake up their senses. Some of our favorites are: dried fruit, fruit leather, granola bars, cheese, gummies, Greek yogurt, smoothies, popcorn, pretzels, crackers, carrots, apples, or pita chips. On the other hand, if everyone is a little too energetic, calming foods (sweet, creamy, or warm) may help them to settle down. Try things like fruit (especially berries, melons, or grapes), yogurt, peanut butter (with apple slices or celery sticks), hummus, smoothies, or a mug of hot chocolate or tea. Or, try a combination! Offering an intentional variety of healthy snacks may give all of your students (not just your kinesthetic learners) a little sensory boost throughout the day.

**All Work and No Play:** For a kinesthetic learner, an all-work mentality can make the school day very dull. Kinesthetic students love fun, creative, and varied lessons. If you notice your kinesthetic learner becoming bored or distracted, consider adding a spontaneous jump on the trampoline, some stretches, or a few quick laps around the backyard to your lesson plans. Because they thrive on active, participatory learning, role-playing scenarios, where they can act out the concepts they have just learned can be especially helpful. Help them retain content by turning review lessons into game time! Play memory-matching games with flashcards, review vocabulary lessons with a crossword puzzle, or review math facts with some sidewalk chalk and a game of hopscotch.

**Get Out:** Who doesn't love a good field trip? But, for kinesthetic learners, getting out of their typical learning environment and into the "real world" is an important part of their education. Plan field trips to reinforce lessons and concepts (try science or history museums, especially with hands-on activities and exhibits). Don't skip the science lab! Join a co-op or turn your kitchen into a chemistry lab to allow your kinesthetic learners to experiment with theoretical concepts, and experience the tangible results. Kinesthetic learners are the doers. They are concrete thinkers and practical problem-solvers. Try adding few hands-on activities to your homeschool day! They can make learning (and teaching) more fun for everyone!

Veronica Whitley is a pastor's wife, homeschool mom of four, and blogger. She can most often be found with a strong cup of coffee in hand. When not homeschooling, you will find her writing at [www.amberssemrau.com](http://www.amberssemrau.com) where she pursues a quiet heart in the chaotic world.

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