

Rationale for AVKO's Concept of Teaching Reading, Writing, Keyboarding and Spelling **AS** the Alphabet is Being Taught – **NOT AFTER**

When students start school (even home school) it is normal for them to want to learn to read and write – right **NOW**. Many students don't want to wait and wait and wait and wait while the alphabet is being taught to them. They want to read right now. But no, traditional methods dictate that they must wait. Right now is not the time. First they must be taught the names of the 26 letters of the alphabet. This seems reasonable enough until we remember that each letter of the alphabet has many different appearances.

Not only is there the upper case **A** and the lower case **a**, but there is the italic *a* and **a** as well as the D'Nealian manuscript *A* and *a*, the D'Nealian cursive *A* and *a*, or the stick-ball **A** and **a** and as well as more than a hundred different printed fonts and as many different handwritten styles as there are writers.

So when you get down to the exact number of different written symbols for the 26 letters of our alphabet, there are well over 300 that must be learned. Now, that's quite a chore. It's no wonder that so many students have trouble learning to read and write when they enter school. What AVKO proposes is a very simple common sense approach. Let's teach the alphabet slowly and as we teach the names of the letters, **teach the sounds** they make and **how these sounds make words**. We can teach the concept of reading words left to right and top to bottom **AS** we teach the alphabet.

What we want the students to learn is that it is the **letters** that **make the sounds** that make the **words** – not the "picture" of the word.

Teachers who employ the sight method of teaching reading often create problems unintentionally. For example the word **PROBLEMS** written in caps does not have the same picture as **problems** in lower case (Notice that only the letter **o** has the same shape in both upper and lower case) and the word *problems* looks entirely different in cursive.

PROBLEMS, problems, Problems, problems

But since as an educated adult you can read these words, let's put you in the position of a student learning to read with sight methods. Assign any meaning you wish to the following scrambled words, three of which are real words and one is not: Rpbalbeo could be carrot. Rpbmseo could be horse. Rpntesed could be barn. Rpbmaeo could be garage. All you have to do is see how fast and accurately you can teach yourself using sight methods to respond correctly to these words.

These mean carrot	These mean horse	These mean barn	These mean garage
RPBALBEO	RPBLMSEO	RPNTESED	RPBLMAEO
rpbalbeo	rpblmse	rpntesed	rpblmaeo
rpbalbeo	rpblmse	rpntesed	rpblmaeo
<i>Rpbalbeo</i>	<i>rpblmse</i>	<i>rpntesed</i>	<i>rpblmaeo</i>

Now that you know these words, match them quickly. Color all the carrots orange, the horse brown, and the barn red in the grid below.

rpblmaeo	RPBLMSEO	<i>Rpbalbeo</i>	rpblmse
<i>rpblmse</i>	<i>rpblmaeo</i>	rpblmse	RPBLMAEO
<i>rpntesed</i>	<i>rpbalbeo</i>	RPNTESED	<i>rpntesed</i>
<i>RPBALBEO</i>	rpntesed	<i>rpblmaeo</i>	Rpbalbeo

We'll bet you didn't even try. Too frustrating, perhaps?

The basic rationale remains the same for teaching remedial reading or teaching English as a second language. What many teachers fail to realize is that the names and the sounds of the letters in our

alphabet are often not the same in other languages that use the Roman alphabet. For example, the name of the letter A can be “AH” and the name of the letter E can be “AY” and the name of our letter “EYE” can be “EE!”

Rationale for AVKO’s Sequence of Letters to be Taught Beginning with ABCD (RST Y) EFGH (W) I (N) JKLM_ OPQ_ _ _ U V _ X _ Z.

Because knowledge of alphabetic order is essential in using dictionaries, telephone books, and filing cabinets, we feel that the learning of alphabetical order and sequencing should be taught **AS** we learn the alphabet. Mastering the lyrics to the alphabet song may be a fun activity but it isn’t much help if we must sing the song almost all the way through at least three times to have some idea where the name Smith is to be found in a phone book.

We do take a few of the very common letters out of order deliberately. Those are RSTYWN. This is to help increase the number of available common words to be read and written. If we followed strict alphabetical order, we couldn’t have plurals of any word or the sh digraph or the words *is* or *was* until 19 letters have been taught. We couldn’t have words like *at* and *cat* until 20 have been taught. And we wouldn’t be able to write *by* or *baby* until we have taught 25 letters.

The letter **A** gives us the word “uh” as in *a* house, *a* car, *a* home, *a* dog, *a* cat, etc.

The letter **B** gives us the word “BAA” as in “*Baa, baa*, black sheep have you any wool?”

The letter **C** gives us the words **CAB** and *cab*.

The letter **D** gives us the words **DAD, dad, BAD, bad, DAB, dab, CAD,** and *cad*.

The letter **R** gives us the words **CAR, car, BAR, bar, BARD, bard, CARD, card CRAB, crab**

The letter **S** gives us the words **CABS, cabs, SCAB, scabs, CARS, cars, SCARS, scars, DADS, dads, SAD, sad, CADS, cads, DABS, dabs, CRAB, crabs, BASS, bass, CASS, Cass, CAST, cast.**

The letter **T** gives us the words **AT, at, TAT, tat, TATS, tats, TAB, tab, TABS, tabs, STABS, stabs, BAT, bat, BATS, bats, RAT, rat, RATS, rats, TAR, tars, STAR, stars, TART, tarts, START, start, STARTS, starts, CART, carts, BART, Bart, DART, dart, DARTS, darts,**

Have you noticed that all these letters and words involve **left-hand** keystrokes?! If you teach keyboarding as you teach handwriting as you teach spelling and reading you will be actively involving both hemispheres of the brain. Up until the letter y, the only right hand keyboarding is the space bar, comma, period, and enter.

The letter **Y** gives us the words **bay, day, ray, bray, tray, batty, catty, tarry, starry, Cary, carry, Bary, Barry, yard.** Notice that all the words are phonically regular. All the initial consonants (onsets) are regular. All the word families (rimes) are regular.

The students quickly learn that the letter a, however, has no sound of its own.

The sound of the letter **a** depends upon its neighboring letters. If it has none (as in the case of the word *a*) its sound is “uh.” If the letter *a* is followed by the letters, *b*, *d*, *s*, or *t*, it is a SHORT A (CVC rule). If the letter *a* is followed by the letter *y* or its identical twin the letter *i*, it is a LONG A (Two vowels walking rule). If the letter *a* is followed by the letter *r* it is pronounced “ah” (The R Control rule). The word “carry” only appears to violate the R Control rule. *Starry* and *carry* do not rhyme. Why? Look at the base word in *starry*. It’s *star*. But there is no single syllable base word in *carry* so it’s an “airy” word as in *marry*, *Harry*, and *Larry*. See more about that later on. Or see the chapter “The Mechanics of English Spelling” in *The Teaching of Reading and Spelling: a Continuum from Kindergarten through College*. This book is available from the AVKO Foundation.

The letter **E** opens up the suffixes *ed* and *er* plus words with the *ea* and *ee* vowel digraphs plus the *eb*, *ed*, *ert* *ess*, *est*, *et* families.

The letter **F** gives us the words starting with *F* and *FR* and the *aff*, *eff*, *aft*, *eft* families.

The letter **G** gives us words such as *gas*, *gab*, etc. along with the *gr* words *grab* and the *ag* and *eg* families.

The letter **H** gives us the words that start with H, CH, CHR, SH, SHR, TH, THR and the atch, etch, ath, eth, ash and esh families.

The letter **W** gives us the words that start with W and WH as well as the AW and EW vowel digraphs. It also gives us the W Control over the letter A. Note: According to the CVC rule wad should rhyme with dad, but it doesn't. The WControl also fights with the R control over the letter A. **War** does not rhyme with **car** nor **ward** with **card**.

The letter **I** gives us the ib, ibe ick, ice, ide, iff, ife, igh, ight, eight, ir, ird ire, irt, is, iss, ise, it, ite, ith families as well as the ai digraph for the aid, aif, air, aise, ait families.

Over 5,000 words are now available with only 14 letters, all of which get daily reviews of their names, sounds, and patterns.

The letter **N** now allows us to add the ing ending to all the families we have already learned. The letter **N** also gives us the n, gn, kn, and sn onsets plus the ain, an, and, ander, ane, ang, ange, ank, ant rimes plus the en, end, ender, ength, ent, ean, ien, in, ind, inder, ing, ink and ine equivalent rimes.

And on we go. Each new letter now opens up new sounds which make new words while we review automatically the earlier letters and sounds that we can now use to make even more new words.

The letter **J** gives us the words beginning with J which combines in one way or another with most of the previous letters.

The letter **K** gives us the words beginning with k plus the ack, ake, eck, eek, eak, eke, ick, ike, iek families.

The letter **L** gives us the L, BL, CL, FL onsets and the al, ald, ale, alf, alk, all, alm, alt, awl, el, eal, eel, eil, eld, elf, elk, ell, elm, elt, ewel, il, ild, ield, ilf, ilk, ill, andle, indle, ankle, inkle rimes.

The letter **M** gives us the words beginning with m and the sm blends plus the aim, alm, am, ame, arm, eam, eem, elm, eme, im, ime, ilm, rimes.

The letter **O** gives a review of all the ending consonants and consonant blends cited above but with the vowel o, oa, and the oo digraphs to make new rimes and rhymes. It also gives us a review of the w-control which operates on the letter o as well as on the letter a as in won, wonder, wool, and wood.

The r control also comes into play with the letter o as in for, ford, cord. And we have the war between w and r over the o. Note that the only way we spell the sound "wur" (except in the word **were!**) is **wor** as in word, work, worth. Notice the normal r control is affected. Word does not rhyme with ford, nor work with fork, or worth with north.

The letter **P** opens the p, sp, pr, spr, pl, spl ph phr sph onsets as well as the p, pe, rp, pt, rimes using the a, e, ea, ie, ee, ea, i vowels.

The letter **Q** is taught simultaneously with the letter **u** as the consonant digraph with the "kw" blend sound as well as the squ onset.

Then the **U** is taught as part of the previous rimes with the addition of the eu, ue, and ui vowel digraphs and the un prefix.

The letter **V** gives us the v onset plus the alve, ave, eave, eeve, eve, ive, ieve, ceive, ove, oave rimes.

The letter **X** gives us the silly x onset for the sound of "z" as in xylophone and the ax, ex, ix, ox, and ux rimes and the ex prefix.

The letter **Z** gives us the z onset plus the ending z rimes altz, azz, aze, azzle, eltzer, ez, ezz, ezzle, iz, izz, izzle, oz, ozzle, uzz, uzzle and the -ize verbs such as specialize which most frequently are -ise verbs in British English as is the word specialise.