

How To Use This Program

Table of Contents: To begin, look at the Table of Contents. Note that this manual is divided into five main sections. The first section is the one you are reading now. It includes the Introduction, Questions & Answers About Teaching Reading, How To Use This Program and the Instruction Schedule.

Instruction Schedule: The Instruction Schedule (pp. 13-24) guides the parent/teacher in a coordinated use of all materials. Each page of the Instruction Schedule is divided into three columns. The first column numbers the "days" from 1-118. The term "day" is relative and should not to be interpreted as 118 consecutive days. An average six-year-old child, working at a consistent pace, should be able to complete all the material within a nine-month period. However, it is always wise to remember that children differ in their rate of development, level of interest, and need for repetition. For some children it may be necessary to divide a single lesson into two or more parts, while others will zip through two complete lessons at one sitting. In practical terms, this means that there will be a wide variation in the speed at which different children move through the program. The key is to make an objective evaluation of your child's needs and abilities and plan accordingly.

The second column of the Instruction Schedule lists the Lesson number and concepts to be covered that day. The third column describes the preparation necessary for a particular lesson. The last column offers space to record the child's progress. *Without reference to the Instruction Schedule, this program cannot be used properly.* Though the pace at which the material is covered can easily be varied to meet individual circumstances, almost without exception, one lesson builds on another. Therefore, any variation in the sequencing

would only serve to confuse both parent and child.

Each of the four subsequent sections of the manual begins with an introduction. *Always read the introduction to a new section before presenting any lesson from it.*

Phonogram Lessons: The Section II includes twenty-five Phonogram Lessons (p. 25-90) that introduce the formation of letters and numerals, the sounds of the common phonograms, vowels, consonants, and syllabication. The yellow phonogram cards are used in conjunction with these lessons. Each lesson is written out in great detail and is supported by the audiotape that provides examples of all the phonogram sounds. (About half of the mothers find this tape useful while the other half say they really don't need it.) Before presenting new phonograms, the parent may listen to the audiotape and practice saying and writing the sounds.

Phonogram Dictation: The Section III gives fifteen sets of Phonogram Dictation Exercises (p. 91-109). These exercises begin after Lesson 4 and continue on a regular basis throughout the remainder of the program. They serve as a constant reminder and review of the forty-five basic speech sounds and their written representations. The Instruction Schedule spells out when these exercises are used.

Spelling Dictation: The Section IV offers twenty exercises in Spelling Dictation (p. 110-146). In these exercises the child is introduced to specialized spelling markings and spelling rules. For ready reference, the markings and rules are summarized on the inside front and back covers of the manual. Each time the child writes a spelling word he marks its special features, e.g. long vowels, multi-letter phono-

grams and silent e's, and repeats any applicable spelling rule. This practice serves to draw repeated attention to the various patterns and rules of spelling. When the child writes words or sentences outside the context of this program, the spelling markings are not used.

Worksheets: The reproducible Worksheets coordinate with the Spelling Dictations to provide additional repetition and reinforcement. Their use is spelled out in the Instruction Schedule.

Command Cards: Beginning on Day 41 and continuing through the next several days the program suggests the use of Command Cards (p. 162). Turn to that page now and read some of the commands. They are nothing more than simple sentences that direct the child to perform some action. The vocabulary in these commands matches closely the phonograms introduced thus far. Though not essential to the program, the commands provide an interesting means for the child to translate written words into actions. For all children, but especially for boys, this is a helpful practice. I have used these commands with one child at a time, with a group of first-grade children, or with my own family of mixed ages. Most beginning readers will not be able to silently read the commands and then perform the actions. They need to say the words out loud before comprehension occurs. This is fine. Later in the year, however, it would be good to return to the commands and see if the same activity can be accomplished silently. Another interesting variation is to have the child (and any other friends or family members who wish to participate) write his own commands. Children especially love to command their parents and siblings to do silly things. This can provide a strong motivation for an otherwise reluctant child to spend several minutes a day writing original sentences. A cautionary note is in order here. Because the child is at a beginning level, many of his words may be incorrectly

spelled and spaces between words may be non-existent. Do not point out the errors or display difficulty in reading the child's work--that would greatly dampen the fun. This activity is *not* a spelling test. Use the child's mistakes only as indicators of areas that require your attention at a later time.

Sentence Dictation: The Section V includes eighteen Sentence Dictation exercises (pp. 147-161). These exercises offer practice in capitalization, punctuation, vocabulary, oral language expression, antonyms, homophones, a review of all spelling rules encountered in the spelling dictations, plus the introduction of a few advanced spelling rules.

Suggested Reading Material: Two different products are suggested for use in conjunction with *Sound Beginnings* but any other reading material of an appropriate level may be substituted. The Instruction Schedule indicates that Set One of the *Primary Phonics Readers* (from Educators' Publishing Service) may be introduced on Day 30 if the *th* phonogram is first introduced. Set 2 may begin on day 41 and Set 3 on day 61. These readers offer ten separate booklets of sixteen pages each. The stories are better than similar readers of this type, the illustrations are inoffensive, the format is uncluttered and most public libraries have them on the shelf. They are also available for purchase from Our Father's House.

Some children will be able to read an entire 16-page story in one sitting, while other children will only be able to read two or three pages. Adjust your expectations to the child's ability and interest.

Following Lesson 23 on Day 66 the *Early Reader's Bible* may be introduced. By this time, the child will have been introduced to all but eight of the 71 basic phonograms. The reading level of these stories is higher than the *Primary Phonics Readers* because a greater array of phonograms is used in each story. This requires the child to process successively

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many more pieces of information. As a result, his reading speed may slow down considerably. This is to be expected. Reading fluency will improve with time and practice.

In spite of the many positive features of the *Early Reader's Bible*, it does pose a few concerns that Catholic parents may wish to address. 1) Jesus is never said to be God. He is "God's Son" or "God's friend." 2) The story of the Last Supper twists the plain meaning of the text and therefore lacks a Catholic understanding. In it, Jesus does not command the apostles to, "Do this in memory of Me." Instead, He makes a passive remark, "When you do this, I will be there with you." 3) The three-letter word *sin* is never mentioned. In a book designed for first grade readers, this can only be a deliberate omission. 4) The Ten Commandments are listed in the order Protestants know them, the First Commandment being divided into two and the last two commandments being combined into one.

Spelling List: Pages 163-176 offers a 2000-word spelling list. It includes all the words from the scripted lessons of *Sound Beginnings* plus another 1600 words that take the student through 12-grade level spelling. Spelling markings and syllable breaks are included. To the right of each word are numbers that designate any spelling rules that apply to the word. The spelling rules are listed on the inside back cover of this manual. In addition to ordinary vocabulary words, the list contains words that should be part of every Catholic child's reading, speaking and spelling vocabulary. Information on page 163 gives more information about how the spelling list may be used as both a teaching and a measuring tool to assess a child's spelling ability.