

## How is the Reading Kingdom different from other reading systems?

Thank you for taking the time to find out about The Reading Kingdom.

The Reading Kingdom is fundamentally different from other reading systems available today in both the skills it teaches and in the methods for teaching those skills. Current reading education typically teaches a phonics approach, a whole language approach, or a combination of the two.

Phonics, the dominant method, teaches the sounding out of words. There is a major problem with phonics which is that the vast majority of words in English cannot be sounded out. For example, let's look at the "at" sound. This letter combination is typically taught in phonics lessons with simple sentences like: "The fat cat sat on the flat mat." This seems fine—until you realize that the a-t combination sounds like the "at" in cat only 25% of the time. The rest of the time kids see a-t in words like ate, water, beat, great, and attend.

And the a-t combination is one of the simpler sounds in English. Consider the word "rough" for instance. How do you explain to a child that the letters r-o-u-g-h are pronounced "ruff"? But then think about what happens to "rough" when you add a "th" to the front of it. It becomes "through". Slip in another "o" after the "th" and it becomes "thorough". The simple fact of the matter is that the sounds that letter combinations make in English change in ways that are completely unpredictable for a child.

car / care / career  
real / realm / reality

dead / dear / deactivate  
rough / through / thorough

face / facet / facetious  
hear / heart / hearse

Or think about the following sentences:

- The bandage was wound around the wound.
- They were too close to the door to close it.
- The farm was used to produce produce.

In order to overcome the problems inherent in sounding out, phonics relies on children memorizing almost 600 rules, such as the "silent e" rule, the double vowel rule, the consonant combination rule and on and on. Remembering nearly 600 rules is impossible for a child - or even an adult for that matter. What's worse, is that the rules themselves are riddled with exceptions. For better or worse, in English, irregularity is the rule. To put it simply, if phonics worked as advertised it would be spelled "foniks".

Whole language has had even poorer results. It provides very little structure for learning and as a result, children are often overwhelmed with unfamiliar words and sentence structures that cause unnecessary difficulties in learning. Without any formalized structure, children find themselves adrift in a sea of unrecognized words – and reading failure often ensues.

**It's because of these problems with phonics and whole language that schools across the nation show that 35%-40% of children, across all socio-economic backgrounds, are failing to master reading (Source: US Dept. of Education) and those who are succeeding are taking longer to learn than they need to.**

So what is the answer? The answer is the Reading Kingdom, a new reading and writing system developed by Dr. Marion Blank, a world renowned expert on literacy and the Director of the Light on Learning Institute at Columbia University. It uses a 6 skill model of reading instruction



that incorporates elements of phonics and whole language while teaching additional skills required for reading and writing success without requiring kids to learn any complicated rules.

**In fact, the Reading Kingdom is the only system that teaches these six skills.** And when children are taught all six skills, they easily master both reading and writing. To get a sense of their power, let's briefly consider what the six skills entail.

### The Six Skills of Reading & Writing

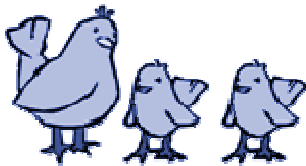
The six skills are: sequencing, motor skills, sounds, meaning, grammar and comprehension.

	Sequencing	Motor Skills	Sounds	Meaning	Grammar	Comprehension
Dr. Blank's Reading Kingdom	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Phonics			✓			
Whole Language						✓

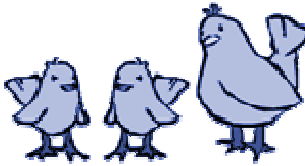
### Sequencing (Letter Order)

When we are young children and see items that are grouped together, we learn that their sequence, or order, doesn't matter. For example:

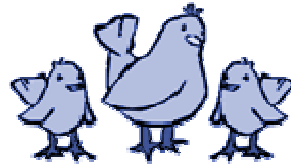
here are some birds



& here are the same birds...



& here are the same birds...



Our experience has taught us that these are all the "same" group of birds. The order they appear in doesn't make any difference. However, when we learn how to read, suddenly, the sequence of the objects becomes essential.

Sequencing is what allows us to take combinations and by changing their order, arrive at totally different words – as you can see in these words:

now won own

pale leap plea

live evil veil

These differences in sequencing are obvious to us, but not to a young child who has not yet learned to read. Amazingly, children are not taught this essential aspect of reading. However, in the Seeing Sequences segment of the Reading Kingdom, children easily and rapidly acquire the sequencing skills they need.



## Motor Skills (Writing)

Writing is reading's sister skill and is an essential part of reading education. In school, children are asked to compose many messages such as stories and journal entries. To do this successfully, they need to have mastered the physical skills involved in creating written words. With paper and pencil material, this means handwriting; with computers, this means keyboarding. Fortunately, for young children, keyboarding does not entail their having to use all ten fingers. A single finger is enough. But the movements of that finger must be guided by teaching which leads the children to have a solid sense of the keyboard layout. With that mental map in place, hunting and pecking vanishes to be replaced by smooth, accurate movements on any keys they need.

The solution is provided in the Letter Land segment of the Reading Kingdom which offers an integrated system for teaching children the skills for recognizing and selecting the letters they need to produce for effective spelling and writing. This segment teaches upper and lower case letters, as well as the beginnings of punctuation.

(The Reading Kingdom also offers an easy-to-use handwriting program that teaches children the fine motor skills and the production of shapes that handwriting requires.)

## Sounds (Phonology)

Phonology is the skill that allows you to take a set of letters (such as "c", "a", and "t") and translate them into sounds that form real words (e.g. "cat"). Unfortunately, the current methods for teaching "sounding out" just don't work in real life. As already noted, aside from a tiny percentage of words, you simply cannot sound out the letters and come up with the right word. For a novice reader English's irregularity is incredibly confusing.

The "solution" that traditional phonics approaches offer to get around this obstacle is to have children learn "rules" about the way letters work. But the problem with the "rules" is that they typically don't work most of the time.

Fortunately, there are easier and more effective methods for converting letters into sounds without requiring children to learn complicated and error-prone rules. All the Reading Kingdom materials offer carefully designed techniques that lead to rapid sound and word identification and they do not require children to memorize any rules!

## Meaning (Semantics)

In early reading children are typically presented with endless pages of words that have nothing to do with one another except for sharing sets of letters. For instance, they may share:

initial sounds: as in "shed", "shirt", "shoe", "shell"  
or middle sounds: as in "food", "boot", "pool", "roof"  
or final sounds: as in "lake", "cake", "make", "take", "rake"

The result of this approach is that children get accustomed to worksheets showing endless sets of disconnected words. In real reading material, of course, words never cluster this way. Even in the earliest readers, words are linked together on the basis of meaning – not sounds. A story about a hungry animal, for example, might read as follows:



“The bear was hungry. She was looking for some food. She spotted a tree with berries...”

None of these words shares common letter patterns. To read this material, a child must be able to shift rapidly from one different word to the next. The sound-sharing words of worksheets do not prepare children to do this, leaving them at a loss when they have to do actual reading.

For children to become effective readers, from the start, they must learn how words combine when they convey meaningful messages. The reading and writing materials in the Reading Kingdom all pay close attention to meaning so that a child is always working with words and sentences that actually mean something – just like the words and sentences they encounter in real life.

### Grammar (Syntax)

Our language contains lots of words. Some estimates put the number as high as one million. Out of that vast number, there is a very small, unique group made up of only 100 commonly used words. They are words such as "the", "is", "was", "they", "how", "what", and "does" and are often referred to as "non-content" words because they seem to lack any clear meaning.

Because these words cannot be sounded out, they are labeled as "exceptions" and they are given very minimal teaching time.

All this overlooks an amazing fact. One hundred or so of these words occupy the majority of any page of print you will ever see in the English language — regardless of whether the book is for a first-grader or a college student.

(In the sentences you just read, the **bolded** “non-content” words add up to 25 of 42 words, resulting in 60% of the total.)

These words are also essential to the structure of any sentence and our system of grammar. For instance consider these two sentences:

The boy walked the dog.  
The boy walked **to** the dog.

The introduction of the word "to" completely changes the meaning of the sentence.

Think about it: if you teach children these one hundred words, they will be able to read half of the words they see and it will help them understand the relationships between the other words! The importance of this to reading instruction cannot be overstated.

The Reading Kingdom is the only system that has been designed to leverage the power of this group of words. As a result, children are provided with a potent tool that makes reading easier, smoother, and easier to understand.



## Comprehension (Text)

Books represent the heart and soul of reading. Unless they have been beset by failure, young children have no deeper yearning than being able to read books on their own.

Unfortunately, motivation is not everything. Good books tell stories. To do that, they need to use a fair number of complex words, ideas, and sentences. It is wonderful to read those stories to children. It is not wonderful to have children read those stories on their own. They are too long and too complex, with the result that children find themselves adrift in a sea of unrecognized words. The experience for novice readers is not pleasure, but rather pain as they experience repeated errors. Nothing is more devastating to learning than high rates of error.

Any parent whose child struggles with the printed page will tell you the real story. With repeated failure, motivation is transformed into tension and misery. Children will love reading only if they can read the messages on the printed page easily and effortlessly and if they see the way ideas are put together to create meaningful stories. Without comprehending the “main idea” conveyed by the books, children aren’t really reading.

That’s why the Reading Kingdom uses a series of 30 custom books that are scientifically designed to provide motivation while simultaneously providing the structure and control children need for effective learning and also to facilitate reading comprehension.

## The Special Ingredient - Our Hidden Abilities

Amazingly, some of the most critical skills for reading are ones we don’t even know we have – our hidden abilities!

By the time your child starts to read, they have already mastered a great deal of spoken language and as a result, they have assimilated an incredible amount of knowledge that forms the basis for what we call their hidden abilities. For example, even a young child may know that the statement “I am looking at she” is incorrect while the statement “I am looking at her” is correct. While they may not know the technical reason why it’s correct, they just know what “sounds right.”

Consider the following examples:

We ought to **record** that he broke the **record**.  
A large farm was used to **produce** the **produce**.  
This is not a good time to **present** the **present**.

In each sentence, our hidden grammatical abilities lead us instantly and automatically to offer two different pronunciations for what appears to be the “identical word.”

The power of our hidden abilities is truly remarkable. They allow us to construct amazingly intricate sentences without knowing how we do it, or why they are correct. They are the key ingredient that makes reading smooth, effortless and automatic.

The Reading Kingdom is the only system with activities to foster the smooth and rapid development of our vital hidden abilities and then to capitalize on these abilities to allow all children — even those who have been struggling — to become star readers.



## Kid Customized

Every child is different! We all know this instinctively, but our education system, due to budget concerns and historical precedent, tends to take a one-size-fits-all approach. The Reading Kingdom has been designed to take advantage of a child's strengths and to help him or her overcome any weaknesses. As a child moves through the program, the path he takes is customized to his particular needs. Because of this, each child's experience in the Reading Kingdom is unique. You could say that the Reading Kingdom is "kid customized". This prevents a child from wasting time learning something she already knows (which leads to boredom) or being faced with tasks that are too difficult (which leads to frustration).

## Reading Kingdom System Highlights

- It is fun, entertaining, and easy to use. After a few lessons, children can often use the program completely on their own.
- It is customized for each child's skill level so the teaching material is matched precisely to a child's ability. Children do not waste any time learning something they already know or being frustrated by material that is too advanced.
- It places a major emphasis on accurate spelling and accurate writing, including correct punctuation, so children attain proficiency in reading's sister skill – writing.
- It is designed to minimize error – something that occurs all the time in learning and something which can destroy self-esteem if not kept to a minimum.
- When error does occur, it offers specific techniques to overcome the problem and reach success.
- It offers regular checks of a child's progress to determine if they are ready to move ahead or if they need to review certain material.
- Each session requires only 15- 30 minutes – so children rapidly progress without ever feeling overwhelmed.
- Another ingenious feature of the Reading Kingdom system is that children never have to learn or memorize the boring, difficult and exception-riddled rules of language. The scientifically designed system teaches the rules implicitly, while children have fun with the material.

For a complete description of how the Reading Kingdom program works, see Dr. Blank's book, ["The Reading Remedy"](#).

