

Sinclair[®] & Macmillan ZX Spectrum[®]

LEARN TO READ 3



CASSETTE 48K RAM

LEARN TO READ 3

Acknowledgements

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winners of the Sinclair/Muse Educational Award 1982.
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Please read this

Tempting as it may be to use the program immediately, we recommend that you spend a few minutes reading this booklet. The program is easy to run, with very simple screen messages guiding you throughout. However, we think it is important to put the computer's role in reading into its correct perspective, and to highlight the aims of each part of the program.

The *Learn to Read* series has been carefully planned to take children gradually through their early stages of reading. It is obviously to children's best advantage to move on through the series at their own pace, moving to the next program only when they are confident enough to do so. It may not be obvious how children are advancing with each program; this booklet is intended to make the steps clearer.

Mainly for parents-helping your child to read

There was a time, not so long ago, when most teachers strongly objected to parents helping their children to read. It was considered that parents did not have the required expertise and that they would exert pressures and do untold damage.

In recent years such ideas have been discredited and several research projects have indicated very clearly that loving and caring parents, with time and enthusiasm, can and do play a very important part in helping children read. At this point it must be emphasised that many children show no desire at all to learn to read before going to school. This is absolutely normal and must be accepted in this way. Persuasion or coercion will not be at all helpful but encouragement can spark off real enthusiasm. Above all, any kind of early reading activity *must be enjoyed*-if books are not associated with pleasure then problems will soon arise.

A few children of between 3 and 4 years do seem to be intensely interested in words and many more become so when they are 4 or 5 years. Learning to read cannot be associated with any one magical formula, neither is success instant, but there is no doubt at all that reading stories to babies and toddlers is the best way to ensure that children become aware of the purpose of books and eventually to want to read themselves. If you take time to talk about the stories and pictures you have read together, this will improve your child's understanding of words. A clear grasp of the meaning of spoken words helps enormously in those early stages of reading.

It is generally accepted that reading should begin with whole words and whole sentences which are meaningful. If the words and sentences are first introduced with matching pictures, the pictures provide clues to enable children to succeed. Remember that children do need lots of practice and this is where computer programs can be so useful. The step between talking and reading is perhaps one of the most difficult and yet important steps that children make. They must learn that the words they speak can be represented by marks. When children can confidently read a number of words and recognise them in different situations, then they can begin to understand that words are made up of letters and that letters have sounds. At this stage some phonic teaching (the matching of letters with sounds) can be introduced, but only very slowly. If your child seems to find word-building difficult, then leave it alone, it will come. If you allow yourself to become anxious and even perhaps disappointed, your child will soon sense this and feel that he or she has failed you. This is no way to encourage children to enjoy books.

Teaching with the whole word or sentence method, followed by phonics, means that children are able to relate new situations to something they already know. For example, if they can read cat, then fat, rat, sat are easy for them. It is surprising what young children can achieve once they realise how things work.

It is important to remember that children learn to read and spell through writing, as well as reading. Sometimes, after reading a story

or using a computer program, try writing some of the important words together. (You write them in yellow crayon then the child can write over your letters.) Don't expect too much too soon, just make it fun. Make letter shapes in sand, or with plasticine, pastry, steamed-up windows - anything which is a part of your normal day to day activities.

Finally, remember that when children go to school they will share the teacher's time with many others. It will be different and very exciting, but they will need all the personal attention you can give. Learning to read is such an important milestone, if your child is to succeed he or she will need the opportunity to practise different skills, with lots of praise and encouragement.

The role of the microcomputer

In recent years the microcomputer has added a new dimension to children's learning. It is not claimed that any computer program used in isolation, can actually *teach* a child to read. Nevertheless, well planned educational software provides an enjoyable and variable form of practice which all children require in the early stages of learning to read.

It must always be remembered that children learn at different rates. The great advantage of the computer is that it enables children to work *at their own pace* and repeat particular parts of each program according to their own needs and enthusiasm. The pressure to keep up with others is totally eliminated and there is complete freedom for the more able children to move quickly through the programs.

The *Learn to Read* programs should help children to move towards becoming readers. The programs are fun to use and will help children to realise that learning is a pleasure.

One of the great advantages of these programs is that they do not accept incorrect spellings. Right from the first stages of reading the child is trained in careful and accurate observation, and the correct spelling of a useful basic vocabulary.

Sharing the programs

There will be many times when your child will choose to work alone with the computer, but do remember there should also be opportunities to share the programs with an interested adult or an older brother or sister, as well as with other children at school. It is more fun for the child to learn *with* someone, and the company of an adult will give a child more confidence, and make the activity more productive.

There is no need to worry if children find some parts more difficult than others, children do vary in the way they learn different skills. We all know that adults find some of the skills required for learning to drive much more difficult than others although eventually this does not affect the quality of their driving performance (how well did you manage your first hill start?!) Some children seem to learn in sudden 'jumps', while others progress at a slow and steady pace.

Children will find some activities more appealing than others - let the child choose. Children will not choose things that they find impossible. It is also wise to let children dictate how long they want to use the computer. It is far better for children to have two minutes of enjoyable learning than half an hour of an experience which might make them averse to learning.

When your child is using the programs, try not to 'interfere' and give the answer all the time - wait until you are asked for help.

Learn to Read and Gay Way

The *Learn to Read* series has been derived from the well-known infant reading scheme, *Gay Way*, which is widely used in primary schools. It features the popular animals found in the books.

However, the software is designed to be used independently or alongside *any* reading scheme or books which children are using at school or in the home. Should you wish to reinforce the computer activities with reading about the animals in the books, there are 16 *Gay Way Introductory Books* to choose from.

Learn to Read 3



Deb the rat



Sam the fox



Meg the hen



Jip the cat



Ben the dog



the fat pig

When children first start to use these programs it is essential that an adult sits with them and talks about the animal characters and their names. The adult should 'read' the name of the animals out loud to children, so they can associate the spoken word with the print.

Loading the program

Make sure your ZX Spectrum® is connected as explained in the Sinclair ZX Spectrum® manual.

Type **LOAD "READ3" ENTER** or
LOAD ENTER

Start the tape.

The message **Loading please wait** should appear on the screen.

Learn to Read 3 is made up of 4 parts. All 4 parts are loaded together. The program takes about 3 minutes to load. When loaded, a menu screen appears:

names
kim
spell
card

Running the program

Selection A moving outline box is a simple selection device used in the series. It allows you to select the part of the program you want. Wait until the box moves on to the required part, then press any key, and that part of the program will begin. For example:



names
kim
spell
card



Pressing a key now would select **kim**.

All the programs in the *Learn to Read* series provide a substantial amount of activity. It would take a long time to run through all parts of the program in one session, and this would not be advisable with a young child whose attention span is rather short. You will probably prefer to use just one part of the program at any one time, returning to it again, or to a different part, at the next session.

We suggest that the first time you use the software you begin with **names**, which introduces the new vocabulary. When completed, it returns to the menu, where you can choose to repeat **names**, or move on to the next part of the program, **kim**, and so on each time. The menu will remind you which part you have just completed, then the box will move on to the next in the sequence. In later runs you may want to practise some activities more than others, depending on the child's ability and enthusiasm. The program allows complete flexibility to do this. If at any time you wish to stop using one part of the program and move on to another:

When the prompt **Press a key** is on the screen,

Press **CAPS SHIFT** and **1** together
(i.e. the command **EDIT**)

This will take you back to the menu screen for selection. (We do not recommend that children are shown how to break out of the program in this way - with some software it could lead to losing the program altogether!)

On the screen At this very beginning level it is not possible to include instructions on the screen which the young child can read and interpret. The *Learn to Read* screen instructions are simple, and have been kept to a minimum - once shown how to run the program, children do not forget, and in many cases will be able to work out what they are expected to do.

Screen prompts appear at the bottom right hand side of the screen

Press a key press any key (apart from **CAPS SHIFT** and **SYMBOL SHIFT**)

Spell spell out, letter by letter, to replace the dashes shown

Press a number choose a number (used in the card game)

Note that there is no need to worry about typing in upper case (capital) or lower case letters - the computer accepts any input from the child and displays the letters on the screen in upper or lower case as appropriate.

Should children have initial difficulty with matching the shapes of upper case letters on the keyboard with the lower case letters on the screen, then it may be useful to make or buy small labels, marked with lower case letters, to put on the keys until they become familiar with both.

names

This introduces further simple vocabulary for word recognition and spelling skills.

- 1 An animal appears at a table, with a caption below, for example, **Deb has a banana.**
- 2 6 small pictures of objects appear at the top of the screen.
- 3 An outline box moves over the pictures. **Press a key** when the box is over the correct picture (banana).
- 4 If the correct picture is chosen the object moves on to the animal's plate. If the wrong picture is chosen, the word appears in the box, then the box continues to move over the pictures.
- 5 The sentence is lengthened to, for example, **Deb the rat has a banana and a cake.** A new set of pictures appears.
- 6 The child must select the correct picture (cake) as before.

kim

This game provides good practice in logical thinking and recall, both of which are so important in reading.

- 1 6 pictures appear on the screen with their appropriate words, then one disappears.
- 2 The child must remember or deduce the missing object.
- 3 The names of the 6 objects are listed in the centre of the screen.
- 4 The child selects from the list by pressing the appropriate number.
- 5 A 'score' bar builds up on the side of the screen which shows how quickly the children have given the right answer. They can see how they improve each time.

Note that the child is now working with an increased vocabulary of over 30 words.

spell

This helps children to see the fine difference between words which appear to be similar, to hear the sounds of different letters and to see how they affect the meaning of the words.

- 1 A sentence is displayed on the screen with one word missing. A choice of words is provided - these look similar and usually feature a rhyming sound, for example, **pig, fig, big, dig**.
- 2 The child must read the sentence and select the word which best fits the meaning. (It would be helpful for an adult to read the sentence and words with the child so that he or she can become more familiar with the different sounds created by different letters.)
- 3 The child must spell the chosen word. Completion of the correct spelling results in a picture being added to the screen. 5 mis-spellings results in the letter being put in by the computer.
- 4 The program continues in this way, gradually drawing a series of pictures on the screen.
- 5 A 'score' bar builds up so that children can see how quickly and accurately they have provided the answers.

card

This is a computer version of the popular card game *Pelmanism*, for one player, or more players taking turns. The game helps to develop memory skills. In this program the game involves the matching of objects with their *initial letters* only, giving the children a first introduction to letter 'sounds'.

- 1 12 playing cards appear on the screen.
- 2 The player selects a card by pressing its number. (8 cards only were used in earlier games. This is the first time children must type in more than one digit for a number, for example **1** followed by **2** for **12**.)
The card turns over to reveal a picture or letter.
- 3 The player selects a second card, trying to match a picture with its initial letter to make a pair, for example **hen picture** with **h**.
- 4 If there is a pair the cards disappear. If the cards do *not* match, they are turned back again. The player should try to remember what is on the back of the cards for the next turn.

