

Florida Center for Reading Research

Read, Write & Type!

What is the Read, Write & Type! Learning System?

Read, Write & Type! Learning System is a software reading program with support materials designed to teach beginning reading skills by emphasizing writing as a means to unlocking the code. This program was developed for 6-9 year old students who are just beginning to read, students from other cultures learning the English language, and students who are struggling readers and writers. *Read, Write & Type! Learning System* may be used in addition to a school's core reading curriculum as enrichment, as a preventive program offering extra practice, or as an intervention. The main goals of the *Read, Write & Type!* program include developing an awareness of the 40 phonemes in English and the ability to associate each one with a letter or a combination of letters and a finger stroke on the keyboard. Other goals include developing the ability to identify phonemes in words and fluency in sounding out, typing and reading any regularly spelled word. Additionally, students' vocabulary and spelling are enhanced, and correct punctuation, capitalization and finger placement on the keyboard are taught and encouraged. The creator of the program suggests that if students can associate individual speech sounds with a finger stroke on the computer keyboard, then students can learn to write whatever they say.

Game-like activities with colorful, animated Storyteller characters motivate the students while leading them sequentially through each lesson of *Read, Write & Type!*. Two Helping Hands, Lefty LaDee and Rightway Mckay, say the sounds and guide the students in the correct placement of their hands and fingers in order to make the sounds. Each of the 40 lessons that comprise the program explicitly teaches one of the 40 phonemes. Lessons from the activity book are matched with lessons on the *Read, Write & Type!* CD and include the identification of beginning, middle, and ending sounds, thinking about sounds in words, rhyming, regularly spelled words and dictation. During lessons using the CD, students begin by saying and writing individual sounds and the letters that represent those sounds and progress to writing words, sentences, and stories. Lesson skills build cumulatively on the preceding lessons allowing students extensive practice in using previously learned letters to write new words. After attaining a certain level in the program, the Power Fountain activity is available for students to practice speed and accuracy in their writing and typing. The E-mail Tower, a simulated e-mail program, is another optional activity for students to practice their newly acquired skills by writing short messages.

Spaceship Challenge is an assessment program designed to evaluate whether students are ready to move to the next level or not. It provides games that assess phonemic awareness, phonics, reading comprehension and spelling. A score is kept of the student's activities, and if more practice is needed before passing to the next level, students will be directed to Bonus Blimp activities. Progress reports may be obtained for individual students or the entire class.

Read, Write & Type! lends itself to flexible use in the school setting. Older students may work independently at computers while younger students require the helpful support provided by teachers, aides, parent volunteers, or older students. Although this program is designated for 6-



9 year old students, 5 year olds may also be ready for the sound activities. For classroom use, it is suggested to have one helper per 5-10 students. So that students may gain maximum benefit from *Read, Write & Type!*, it is suggested that students work 30-60 minutes, 3 times a week at the same computer. The Activity book which serves as a teacher's guide, contains the 40 lessons that accompany the lessons on the CD, a scope and sequence chart defining the sequence of phonemes and the progression of language concepts and typing skills, detailed information on the use of the program, as well as helpful tips and suggestions for the pacing and scaffolding of each lesson when the student encounters problems, and a simple nonsense word test to assess a student's phonic knowledge and whether or not they can sound out new words. Assistance and instruction is also provided in Spanish. Included in the *Read, Write & Type!* Learning system is: a Read, Write & Type! CD, Spaceship Challenge Assessment CD, 18 reading booklets, an activity book with 40 lessons, a wall poster, practice keyboard, keyboard cover, and reward stickers.

How is the Read, Write & Type! Learning System aligned with Reading First?

The five essential components of reading instruction cited by Reading First, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension are evident in *Read, Write & Type!* with the first three components figuring more prominently than the others. There are many activities designed to develop phonemic awareness in *Read, Write & Type!*. One finds frequent examples of alliteration, such as the villain Vexor the virus, Ann the Ant who says /aaa/, Issa the Inchworm who says /iii/, and Ed the Engineer who says "Excellent." Phonemic awareness is developed and enhanced by listening to rhyming words, short stories with multiple words beginning with the lesson's target sound, and syllable deletion. Sound games that emphasize the beginning, middle or ending sounds in words are a strong feature in this program and are skillfully used to promote acquisition of the alphabetic principle.

Phonics instruction builds systematically upon the phonemic awareness activities. Sound games occurring in the beginning of the lesson turn into sound letter games as the lesson progresses. Individual letters are Storytellers whose names start with the sound of the key where they live, such as Tut the Toucan, Sass the Snake, or Daff the Doughnut. Students may hear the name of a letter by clicking that letter on the keyboard, or, they may hear the letter's sound if they press the key. To signal the student as to whether or not a vowel's pronunciation is long or short, a balloon appears with the Storyteller representing that particular vowel. Blending is introduced by typing syllables, words and phrases. The sequence of sound letter introduction within this program enables students to quickly write regular words that are easily assembled into simple decodable sentences and stories. After the 8th lesson, 2 decodable books are introduced between levels that include only the phonics skills that have been previously taught allowing students to practice the skills they have been learning with new text. The instructional design of the lessons allows students to see how the skills they are learning are immediately applied to reading words and sentences. Practice and review is integrated throughout the lessons and accentuated by typing as students say the sound of the letters and words out loud during sounding out and blending. By virtue of the writing process, students are more consciously aware of individual sounds and the letters they represent. The typing dimension of this program heightens students' ability to see the connection between reading and spelling and allows them to actively think about words, further strengthening their foundational skills in beginning reading. The

author of *Read, Write & Type!* underscores the importance of reading through typing by emphasizing that text “is a way of making speech visible.”

Fluency is primarily developed by activities that promote automatic letter and word recognition. Students are offered repeated opportunities to say or read out loud, type and retype letters, syllables, words and sentences, increasing automaticity. The Power Fountain activities provide extra practice typing for speed and accuracy. Prosody is nurtured as students listen to expressive readings of the short stories.

Vocabulary and comprehension development are embedded within lesson activities. Vocabulary learning opportunities contained in the exercises that are used to teach phonemic awareness and phonics, but vocabulary development is not a specific focus of the program. Likewise, the program provides opportunities to children to construct meaning while they read through the stories that it contains, but explicit comprehension strategies are not taught. The program also offers opportunities for children to connect to meaningful language through the extensive writing opportunities it provides.

The Activity book from *Read, Write & Type!* is self-explanatory providing necessary information for proper implementation of the program. For schools wishing to have more in terms of professional development, there are two videos that show teachers how a school uses the program: 1) About the Read, Write & Type Learning System; 2) Read, Write & Type at Santa Rosa Charter School. Technical support is also offered by telephone.

Research Support for the Read, Write & Type! Learning System

Read, Write & Type! was produced in 1994 by Talking Fingers, Inc. and its parent company, California Neuropsychology Services (CNS). The program’s design is based upon reading strategies that have been proven through scientific research to be effective in beginning reading instruction. Born out of research exploring the use of computers as tools for learning, *Read, Write & Type!* offers a reading program that emphasizes writing by means of visually engaging technology infused with instruction in beginning reading. The present version of *Read, Write & Type!* is a synthesis of research from schools in California and Florida.

A study conducted by Florida State University of first grade children from five elementary schools examined the efficacy of Read, Write, and Type as an intervention program to teach beginning reading skills to children who had been identified as at risk for developing reading problems. Using a randomized control group design, students were assigned randomly either to a control group that did not receive supplementary instruction, or to an intervention group that received supplementary instruction using either the *Read, Write & Type!* (RWT) program or the *Auditory Discrimination in Depth* (ADD) program. From October through May, students received instruction in groups of three during four, 50-minute sessions each week. Half of the instruction in each session was provided by teachers, and half by computers. Post-testing revealed large gains in phonemic reading skills (2 full standard deviations) with similar gains in reading accuracy. The students in the intervention groups also achieved reading comprehension scores much higher than their general verbal ability. Children in both experimental groups also achieved significantly higher than children in the control group on measures of both word reading accuracy and comprehension. A more extensive summary of this study can be found on the FCRR website as technical report number #2 (Torgesen, Wagner, Rashotte, & Herron, 2003).

Another study in California, conducted by CNS and funded by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, compared 94 first grade students who received two 1-hour

sessions per week of *Read, Write & Type!* over a 7-month period to the performance of a group of 50 first grade students from a comparable school. Pre- and post-testing included Blending phonemes, Reading Nonwords, Reading Words, Elision, and Spelling. Although the control group started with higher reading levels than the experimental group, the experimental group received significantly higher end of year scores on Blending Phonemes ($p < .001$), Reading Nonwords ($p < .05$), and Spelling, indicating the effectiveness of *Read, Write & Type!* at improving reading scores. A summary of this research can be found at http://www.readwritetype.com/research_wagon.html

The developers of *Read, Write, and Type!* also reported a study in which 16 Spanish-speaking students received instruction with *Read, Write & Type! (RWT)* in an after-school class. The *RWT* students were compared to 16 comparable control students who either went home after school, or attended after-school tutoring or day-care. All 32 students were 6-7 year old struggling readers, Spanish-speaking, in the lowest 40% of their class in reading scores, had Spanish as their home language, and attended classes that were primarily in English with support in Spanish. The *RWT* group received one hour of instruction 5 days a week and finished the 40 lessons for a total of 60-70 hours of instruction. Each day's lesson was structured such that the initial part of the lesson was a "warm-up" in group format, using lesson plans from the Activity book such as: introducing the lesson's new sound, naming pictures that would be encountered in the computer program and then generating sentences with those words, phonemic awareness activities, and discussing new vocabulary words. This was followed by 30 minutes at the computer with the *Read, Write & Type!* CD. Students were pre- and post-tested using the Woodcock-Johnson Word Attack and Word Identification subtests in both English and Spanish. Students who received instruction with the *Read, Write, and Type!* program improved more in their phonemic decoding and word identification skill than children who were not exposed to the program. A summary of this research can be found at http://www.readwritetype.com/research_spanish.html

In sum, research support for *Read, Write & Type!* demonstrates its effectiveness for improving reading scores in first grade students with varying needs: struggling readers, students learning the English language, and students learning at a normal rate. The content and instructional design is supported by strategies with a strong research base.

Strengths & Weaknesses

Strengths of the *Read, Write & Type! Learning System*:

- The Activity manual is an excellent resource, containing important tips, ideas for instruction, and information about reading and struggling readers that is born from the research.
- Recorded speech for instruction, feedback, and story reading is clear, distinct, and expressive.
- The strong emphasis on letter sounds rather than letter names can be very helpful for struggling readers.
- Each lesson is highly structured with instruction that is consistently explicit and systematic, using mostly regularly spelled words.
- Immediate feedback includes praise and error correction, often including several levels of scaffolding.
- Lessons build cumulatively on the preceding lesson, providing repeated practice.
- This imaginary reading journey in which students must figure out how to reclaim the letters that Vexor the virus has stolen is engaging, motivating and instructive.

- Spaceship Challenge Assessment program assesses to see whether a student is ready to move to the next level. It provides instructional as well as evaluative information to teachers and parents.

Weaknesses of *Read, Write & Type!*:

- The *Read, Write, and Type!* program does not explicitly and systematically teach vocabulary or reading comprehension strategies.

Which Florida districts have schools that implement the Read, Write & Type Learning System?

District name district phone number

For More Information

<http://www.readwritetype.com>

References

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