

The Hierarchy of Learning

In Zoo-phonics, we teach the phases of the language process through the concept of “The Hierarchy of Learning” (also called “The Acquisition of Language”). These stages are first listening, then speaking, reading and writing. The concrete methodology of Zoo-phonics follows these stages and connects them all together.

If an infant’s first steps in acquiring language (which lead eventually to reading, spelling and writing) are listening and then speaking, parents can have their tools at hand! Playing with the alphabet through Signals (using those large muscles for memory) as well as their sounds, memorizing nursery rhymes and simple poems, talking and discovering reading together, and oh so much more, prepares the soil and plants the seeds for reading and writing skills that children will need soon.

Remember that each child is in her/his own developmental time and space. The phases of learning can be supported, but not hurried. Zoo-phonics teaches the sequence of learning according to the natural development of children: listening first, and then speaking, reading and writing. Zoo-phonics uses the language that the children have already developed, and connects it to the sounds of the alphabet.

Watch how babies acquire language. They listen, and then mimic sounds they hear. They respond to the speech patterns of the family. They then begin to connect these sounds. Words begin to form and are used over and over again, and at the same time new ones are added.

When a parent reads to a child, the child watches carefully. Mommy and Daddy look at those funny marks on the page and say words that tell a story. The child becomes aware that those marks on the page mean something. Sooner or later, the child will hold a book open and will make up things as if s/he were reading.

The same things happens with writing. Mom, Dad or an older sibling write, so the child begins to make squiggles on paper that often have meaning to her/him. The reading and writing process has begun! Through Zoo-phonics, due to the body movements called “Signals,” reading and spelling skills develop at the same time, because they are taught as part of the same process. It won’t be long before your students will actually be reading and spelling small but important words!