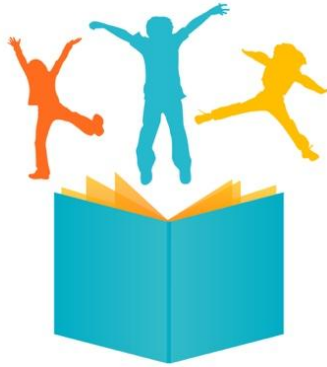


SureReading

method



SureReading

**Free information
booklet
by**

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The **SureReading** method

This booklet consists of the following topics:

- Objective of the **SureReading** method

followed by addressing some FAQ:

- What is the importance of syllabification?
- Sight Reading or Phonics?
- Do we need sensory integration for reading, writing and spelling?
- How can we improve access to different areas of the brain?
- How can we improve brain and sensory integration?
- Is the path to Reading Readiness (RR) the same for girls & boys?
- What is different about the **SureReading** method?

Objective of the **SureReading** method

The objective of the **SureReading** method is to provide a systematic approach to reading, writing and spelling, so that these skills can be learned easily and successfully.

The method consists of 3 different parts:

- 1) **Prerequisite skills**
- 2) **Brain access**
- 3) **Whole brain reading skills**

1. Prerequisite skills

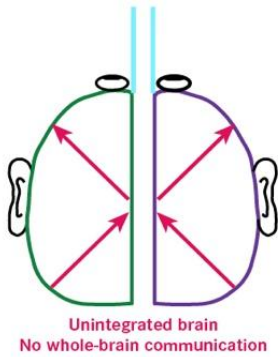


Reading is a complicated whole brain activity that requires a state of developmental readiness as well as the presence of certain prerequisite skills. This state is often referred to as **Reading Readiness (RR)**. If RR is not achieved when reading is introduced, this will almost invariably set the child up for a lifelong use of survival strategies that are based on very limited brain access and connectivity.

In most countries, including Australia, RR is assumed, not checked. In my experience, nearly all children who developed reading problems had *not* achieved RR when reading was introduced. When I assessed their prerequisite skills, some or many of them were lacking and when I assessed their reading, most children still did not have whole brain access and they usually lacked effective decoding strategies for reading.

The **SureReading** method is designed to ensure that all prerequisite skills are present before reading is introduced. You can learn which prerequisite skills need to be present and how to achieve RR in school-based/face-to-face/online professional development sessions or in the 1-day **Reading Readiness** course (check www.optimumlearningandhealth.com for upcoming course dates).

2: Brain access



The most common cause of learning problems is lack of access to one or more parts of the brain required to perform a task. Reading is a whole brain task and if a part of the brain is not accessible, that part cannot be involved in the learning process. The child then needs to cope without this part and will usually resort to *survival strategies* that help the child manage in the best way possible, but not the best way forward. The **SureReading** method was designed to ensure that all areas of the brain involved with the reading process are accessible before reading is introduced.

The most common reason for lack of access is the fact that the child had not (yet) reached a high enough level of brain and sensory integration at the time reading was introduced. This is often referred to as an unintegrated brain (see picture) with little or no communication between the 2 hemispheres.

The **SureReading** method was designed to enhance the level of brain and sensory integration to ensure that whole brain reading will be possible. You can read more about sensory integration in the **free** e-Booklet: *How to Improve Learning* that you can download from the Products section of my www.optimumlearningandhealth.com and www.autismrecovery.com.au website.

3. Whole brain reading skills

The 3rd part deals with the actual process of learning how to read. This involves teaching the skills required for whole brain reading, ie decoding, encoding and reading comprehension, using all senses and both sides of the brain.

The **SureReading** method aims to develop skills for:

- knowing the names as well as the possible sounds of the letters
- building a word from the sounds of the letters within the word (encoding)
- analysing the sequence of the sounds within a word (decoding)
- syllabification, i.e. the process of decoding a multi-syllabic word, so that the child can read any word, without having to know the meaning of the word first

Whole brain reading also means reading with all senses: **Visual (V)**, **Auditory (A)** and **Kinesthetic (K)**. Therefore, the above skills will be developed in a multi-sensory way, so that each child's individual learning style will be included.

What is the importance of syllabification?

Syllabification is an important part in the progression from mono-syllabic (i.e. simple 1-syllable words) to multi-syllabic words (i.e. 2 or more syllables). Many children in Australia and the UK have told me that they are afraid of "big" words, but I never came across this when I lived in the Netherlands. I therefore became curious why there was such a difference in the children's reading experiences between those countries. On one of my visits back to the Netherlands, I visited a primary school in my hometown and looked through the teaching

instructions for their reading method. There were many similarities with programmes used in Australia, but one important difference stood out: the **syllabification rules**. They were just as I remembered, but I had never seen them written down because they were never formally taught. Our early reading books were written in a pre-syllabified form, so that a beginner reader can see that the phonetic rules for reading a mono-syllabic word (e.g. hi), are the same as for reading a multi-syllable word (e.g. hi-king). This helped them gain confidence and see that big words are basically many syllables strung together, like a train with many wagons. I then investigated what the syllabification rules were in other countries in continental Europe and discovered that they were the same everywhere. However, these rules were different from the syllabification rules used in the UK and other English-speaking countries.

This was interesting to me, considering that I first learned to read in Dutch with the “Dutch” syllabification rules, but then when we learned English, French and German, we used the same syllabification rules for reading unknown words in all of those languages and these rules worked equally well for each language, including English. To put these rules to the test, I pre-syllabified some stories with these “Dutch” rules in the English language and gave them to children with dyslexia and autism. They all said they found them much easier to read than unsyllabified stories.

Therefore, syllabification is a very important part of the **SureReading** method. There are 3 basic syllabification rules. If you want to learn how to syllabify in an easy and consistent way, you can do so in online/face-to-face consultations, in school-based/face-to-face/online professional development sessions or in the 1-day **Syllabification Rules** course (for upcoming course dates go to: “course brochures” on www.optimumlearningandhealth.com).

Sight Reading or Phonics?

Many reading methods have come and gone over the years. Often the baby gets thrown out with the bath water and a new approach becomes the new norm. Originally most children were taught reading through **Phonics**, which is the process of sounding out all of the letters in the word, e.g. c-a-t. Not all children did well with Phonics, so Sight-reading took over from Phonics.

Sight-reading is the process of recognising the picture of the whole word, rather than breaking the word down into its parts, i.e. the letters and syllables. In the early stages of reading, most children can manage quite well with the Sight-reading approach. The reason for this is that the letters are usually in big print and words consist of only one or two syllables, which are used repeatedly, so that it is easy to recognise them as a picture.

The approach of Sight-reading works especially well for children who process information visually, however it does not provide them with any word attack skills, which they need in case they have never seen the word before. As the size of the letters decreases and the length of the words increases, the process of word recognition becomes increasingly difficult.

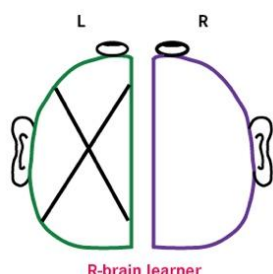
There are many children who automatically sound out the words whilst looking at the word and they may eventually end up knowing the relationship between the picture of a word and the sound of a word, without ever needing to be taught formally.

These children usually have no problems learning to read, write or spell, regardless of the method used, as they had achieved RR and a high enough level of brain and sensory

integration when the Sight-reading method was introduced. Their brain was therefore able to put structure to what they had experienced in all 3 sensory channels, which is a subconscious learning process. However, it doesn't mean that they are conscious of their own strategies, e.g. being able to explain to someone else how they would syllabificate a word they have never seen before. For them syllabification is an afterthought, not a strategy for reading a word they have never seen before.

There is however a large group of children (mainly boys (see page 6 for explanation)) where this process doesn't take place automatically. When they read, there is total silence in their head. They look (often stare) at the words in the hope that they recognise them and if they don't, they have no way of making sense of the word. If they know another word that starts with the same letters and has roughly the same length and looks similar, they will often substitute the word they do know for the word they do not know, for example "reasonable" for "responsible". For the right brain: "close enough is good enough", but the left brain is more analytical and would not make a mistake like this.

This group of children therefore seems to learn with the right brain at the exclusion of the left brain, which is usually the result of reading being introduced at an age where they had not achieved a high enough level of brain and sensory integration yet. The child then tries to do the best it can under the circumstances, which means s/he learns to read with only one hemisphere of the brain. The hemisphere they "choose" is usually determined by their dominant eye (for more information on eye dominance, see the [free](#) e-Booklet: [How to Improve Learning](#)).



These children are often left-eye and/or left-ear dominant and tend to perceive the world from a right brain perspective (**R-brain learners**). The right brain processes the world in a holistic way; hence the total picture approach works well for them, initially. However, when they hear a word, they process it as one sound only and find it difficult to analyse the whole sound into its separate sounds, which is a left-brain task.

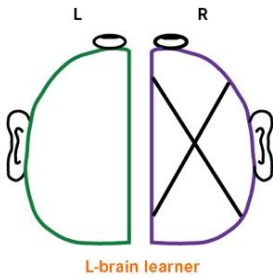
This group of children often have difficulties tracking from left to right with both eyes. Instead, their eyes find it easier to track from right to left as in Hebrew and Arabic. This can lead to reversals in reading and writing such as: "b" for "d", "on" for "no", "was" for "saw" or "waps" instead of "wasp".

When writing, they may leave letters out or add extra letters in and often some letters are in the wrong order. It therefore doesn't look like phonetic spelling (write the word as it sounds).

Language is processed predominantly in the left brain. The left brain is the analytical brain. It focuses on details (parts) and sequence. The left brain likes structure and a step-by-step approach and will therefore always attempt to put structure to an experience.

Therefore, it is more inclined to notice the individual sounds (**Auditory or Phonological discrimination**), movements of the mouth, tongue, throat and lips (**Kinesthetic discrimination**) and the sequence of the letters within the word (**Visual discrimination**) compared to the right brain that tends to process the whole instead of the parts.

Children who predominantly use the left brain (**L-Brain learners**) usually know how to sound out the word, but they have to do this every time they see this word. They do not seem to take a picture of the word or they cannot store the picture of the word. As a result, they do not recognise that they have seen the word before, so they have to sound it out again every time they see the word.



L-Brain learners also often have problems with reading comprehension, which is a right brain activity as this has to do with developing a total picture of the story. This is usually due to lack of brain and sensory integration and as soon as the child has achieved a higher level of brain and sensory integration, the reading comprehension usually improves by itself (see the story of Hilary in the [How to Improve Learning](#) e-Booklet).

However, for the **R-brain learners** just gaining a higher level of brain integration is usually not enough, because they still need to learn the left-brain decoding skills and auditory processing skills that they are lacking.

This is the reason that after a period of using Sight-reading solely as their preferred reading method, most schools have adopted some kind of Phonics programme again.

Do we need sensory integration for reading, writing & spelling?

The short answer is, yes, we do need sensory integration for processing whole brain subjects such as reading, writing and spelling and also for Mental Mathematics (see [Live Maths](#) page). Recent research has shown that people who move their lips whilst they are writing, spell much more accurately than people who do not move their lips. In other words, people who put the sound, feeling and picture of a word together, are better spellers than people who do not. You can learn the best strategies for spelling in school-based/face-to-face/online professional development sessions or in the [Spell with flying colours](#) course.

Reading and writing require pictures to be translated into words and vice versa. The **SureReading** method is designed to promote sensory integration, therefore in the **SureReading** method the picture of a word is always combined with the sound as well as the feeling that is produced in the mouth and throat by saying the word out loud to promote sensory integration.

How can we improve access to different areas of the brain?

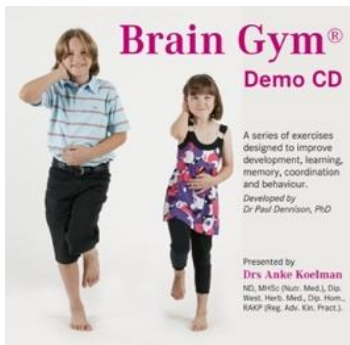
The late Dr. Paul Dennison, PhD, Creator of Educational Kinesiology (Edu-K), or Edu-Kinesthetics as it is called in the USA, designed a set of **Brain Gym**® activities designed to bring the brain in a **switched-on** state for learning. These Brain Gym® activities can be done for 5 minutes at home or with the entire class at school before reading, writing, spelling, mathematics or sports).



Brain Gym® activities can help to improve communication between the 2 hemispheres of the brain (Midline Movements), to feel calmer and more relaxed (Lengthening Activities and Deepening Attitudes) and to help improve concentration and coordination (Energy Exercises and Additional Cross Crawl exercises). He also designed a set of Vision Gym® activities that aim to improve many aspects of vision and imagery.

In my experience, doing Brain Gym® on a regular basis often results in an improvement in learning as well as coordination and behaviour.

In the **Autism – Moving into Literacy** course you will learn all Brain Gym® activities that can help improve literacy skills such as reading, writing and spelling. You can also learn the Brain Gym® activities in school-based/face-to-face/online professional development sessions



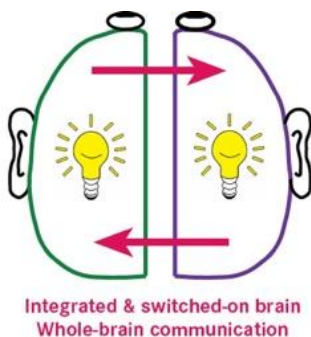
The **Brain Gym® Demo CD** shows how these activities can be done and when, i.e. before which school subject or activity.

The CD is available in downloadable form from the Product section of www.optimumlearningandhealth.com and www.autismrecovery.com.au.

How can we improve brain and sensory integration?

Dr. Paul Dennison also developed a process to improve communication between both hemispheres (or sides) of the brain. This process is one of the most successful tools I have ever come across to enhance learning in general and reading in particular. Building on the success of this process, which he termed the Dennison Laterality Repatterning (DLR) process, I have developed an individualized and targeted brain integration process, a sensory integration process and an integration process specifically designed for the Immune system and the Primitive reflexes. You can read more on the [Integrative therapy](#) page.

If you would like to see how quickly these Integration processes can enhance whole brain communication, please visit the [Testimonials](#) page. You can also see many writing examples of “before” and “after” Brain Gym® and Brain Integration in the **free** e-Booklet: [How to Improve Learning](#) and in the story of Max on the [Primitive reflexes](#) page.



The key to whole brain learning therefore, is an integrated and switched-on brain. We are not born with an integrated brain. It takes 5-6 years for girls' brains to integrate to the point of RR and 7-8 years for boys' brains. Boys have a hormone, Testosterone, that actually prohibits them from integrating until 2 years after girls' brains are integrated.

This explains why at the age of 5, when children go to school in Australia, most boys are not ready for activities that require a high level of brain integration such as reading, writing, spelling and mental mathematics, whereas most girls are.

Is the path to RR the same for girls & boys?

No, the path to RR is quite different for girls and boys. The reason for this difference seems to be related to the Hunter/Gatherer skills they needed to learn in early childhood in ancient times. Initially, boys tend to develop the right brain more (gross motor development), whereas girls tend to develop the left brain more (language and fine motor development). This explains why girls are much more competent at tasks like colouring in and cutting things out along the lines at an earlier age, compared to boys. Girls are also quite happy to sit down and chat to their friends, whereas boys would usually prefer to run around and hang upside down from trees.



In the Netherlands, Germany and Sweden, this difference doesn't matter much, as formal learning does not start till 6, 7 or 8 years of age respectively. However, in the UK, Australia and New Zealand, children are expected to learn whole brain tasks like reading and writing when they are 4 1/2 - 5 years old respectively. As brain and sensory integration has not yet been completed in boys at that age, boys often find learning these subjects very difficult. Consequently, they have no choice but to do these activities with only one side/part of the brain. Which side that is, usually depends on their Dominance Profile and more often than not, they choose the side that corresponds to their dominant eye and/or ear, not their hand.

In November 1988, the Economist published an article about a research study that was conducted to compare the reading ability of children in Germany and Sweden on the one hand and UK on the other hand. In the UK, children start reading and writing when they are 4 1/2 years old, which is similar to Australia, where they start as soon as they are 5 years old. The reading age was determined at the age of 10.

The results showed, that even though the children in the UK had practised reading for 5 1/2 years and the children in Germany and Sweden had only practised for 2 – 3 1/2 years, the children from Germany and Sweden outperformed the children from the UK! When they compared the number of children who dropped out of secondary school and tertiary education, a higher number of dropouts was found in the UK. It was also interesting, that in Germany and Sweden people were continuously involved in further learning on a voluntary basis. In Sweden, people of 65 years and over were enrolling in courses to study for example Shakespeare and Japanese, because they enjoyed learning. In the UK this was not as common. Apparently learning was considered an enjoyable activity in Germany and Sweden, but in the UK the struggle of the early learning experiences had created such bad memories that the sooner they could quit formal learning, the better.

From the above results it follows that practise doesn't necessarily make perfect, because the children in the UK had a lot more practice, but they were practising reading with one side of the brain only and that will never lead to perfect whole brain reading. *Only perfect practise makes perfect!* In other words, if the brain is fully integrated when reading is introduced and if all prerequisite skills have been learned, then learning-to-read is an easy task and this is the case in Germany and Sweden. However, if all kinds of survival strategies have to be adopted in order to cope with the demands of school, then reading will be a struggle.

The brain has a preference for repetition, therefore these poor survival strategies will rarely change by themselves. Someone else needs to reopen the developmental windows and

install more successful strategies, but until that happens, the brain will continue to use the same unsuccessful strategies for reading that it has always used. This is illustrated by the fact that many people who experienced reading difficulties as a child still do not like reading as adults and more often than not, they remain poor readers for the rest of their lives. The 2007 Senate inquiry stated: ***“Failure to develop basic reading skills by age 9 predicts a lifetime of illiteracy.”***

The same principle applies to writing. When writing is introduced too early, most children will use an immature pen grip, i.e. they move their thumb and sometimes other fingers across the pen to hold it in place and steady (1st picture). This is because the more mature Tripod grip (2nd picture) is difficult for most children under the age of 6, as it requires a level of fine motor coordination they haven't achieved yet. Unfortunately, once this immature grip becomes a habit, most children will continue to use this immature pen grip, often for the rest of their lives, unless a teacher or parent insists on changing to the Tripod grip!



Research has shown that the best note takers at university are the students who can write the quickest and therefore have the best chance of taking down what was said during lectures. Children who use an immature pen grip are often slow writers, because they press too hard into the paper, instead of sliding sideways over the paper. The Tripod grip allows for maximum speed and minimal pressure downwards into the paper, resulting in fast and easy note taking later on.



What is different about the **SureReading** method?

Most methods focus on teaching content, but the **SureReading** method focuses on all aspects of the learning process and in the following order of priority:

1. **Access.** Whole brain accessing, including the involvement of all senses.
2. **Strategies.** Efficient strategies for all subjects that can be learned once whole brain accessing is achieved.
3. **Content.** All content can be learned easily once whole brain accessing is achieved and efficient strategies for all subjects have been learned.

Summary: When children enter school, they are at different stages of development. Yet they are all offered the same curriculum, regardless of their ability to deal with this curriculum, which can result in many learning difficulties as well as behaviour difficulties. The **SureReading** method caters for the individual child and starts at a level that matches the individual child's developmental readiness. It can be used in Preschools and Kindergartens to develop the necessary prerequisite skills and in Primary and High Schools to develop and further the skills. It has shown to be especially suitable for children with Dyslexia and those who are on the Autism Spectrum. You can read more about the **SureReading** method (or programme) on the **SureReading** page of the www.autismrecovery.com.au and www.optimumlearningandhealth.com website.

When reading is experienced as an activity that is both fun and achievable it will lead to optimum results.



If you want to talk to me about how I can assist in improving your or your child's reading, writing or spelling, please contact me for a **free half hour introductory phone/online consultation**: Phone: [+61423763273](tel:+61423763273) or email: akoelman@ozemail.com.au.

You can also book online for free/paid consultations on the [Consultations](#) page of www.autismrecovery.com.au and www.optimumlearningandhealth.com.