
UNIT 21 TEACHING BASIC READING AND WRITING SKILLS

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21.1 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit and the next, you will study how to teach the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic to the child with cerebral palsy and the methods to use for teaching. You need to plan a number of activities which will help the child to apply the learnt skills in a variety of situations in day-to-day life — only then would the education being provided to the child become useful. **Basic reading, writing and arithmetic skills can be taught to the child by the teacher as well as by parents and the community worker.**

As we mentioned in Unit 20, some children with cerebral palsy may not be able to follow the conventional academic syllabus but would benefit from a life skills curriculum. One aspect of the life skills curriculum is functional academics, which includes functional reading, writing and arithmetic. What do we mean by functional reading, writing and arithmetic? We mean by the basic reading, writing and arithmetic skills. In this Unit, we shall take up two areas of functional academics, i.e. reading and writing. In the next Unit, we shall focus on arithmetic skills, which includes concepts of time, money and measurement.

How will this Unit help you?’

This Unit will help you to understand and become familiar with:

- the meaning of ‘functional skills curriculum’ and its relevance for some children with cerebral palsy;
- the meaning of ‘functional academics’ and its importance in the education of some children with cerebral palsy; and
- how to teach reading and writing to the child.

21.2 FUNCTIONAL SKILLS CURRICULUM

Some children with cerebral palsy are able to follow the regular school syllabus, though they may require some specific teaching strategies, instructional modifications and assistive devices, depending on their abilities and limitations. We have discussed these modifications and the use of assistive devices in Unit 20 and the teaching strategies in Unit 7.

But many other children with cerebral palsy will find it difficult to follow the regular school syllabus. **They would benefit from a life skills curriculum (also called ‘functional skills curriculum’), where the focus is on teaching the child those concepts and skills that will be relevant and helpful in either increasing participation or functioning independently at home, in the school, neighbourhood, workplace and the community.**

The different components of the functional skills curriculum are the following:

- 1) **Functional Academics** (includes functional reading, writing and arithmetic).
- 2) **Community Skills** (includes getting around in the community, mobility use of transport, making use of recreational facilities and shopping).
- 3) **Home Management Skills** (includes cooking, housekeeping and managing finances).

In this Unit and the next, we shall learn how to teach functional academic skills to the child. In Unit 23, we shall take up the other two areas of the functional skills curriculum.

21.3 FUNCTIONAL ACADEMICS

‘Functional academics’ refers to the basic reading, writing and numeracy skills (i.e. basic literacy skills) that are required for independent living. You know that some children with cerebral palsy who also have mental retardation, have a limited ability to understand, need more time to learn and find it difficult to transfer skills learnt in one situation to another, unless they are specifically taught to do so (refer to Unit 1 to refresh your memory). Therefore, it is important that the academic skills you impart to the child should have functional utility. In other words, **what we select for teaching should be useful for the person to function independently at home, in the school and the community.**

Let us understand this with the help of an example. A ten-year-old boy with cerebral palsy and associated condition of mental retardation may not have yet learned to recognize the letters of the alphabet. However, it is important for him to be able to:

- read and write his name, so that he can recognize it when it is written in his books, on the bulletin board of the school and can write it himself on his worksheets;
- read the signboards on the roads, in the shops, in the railway station or the hospital;

- read the names of common household items, so that he can make purchases from the market by reading the list of items;
- read signs such as ‘exit’, ‘go’, ‘in’, ‘out’, ‘danger’, ‘poison’, ‘toilet’, ‘fire alarm’ which are found in most buildings, in order to protect himself and take care of himself;
- sign his name and to be able to fill up basic forms.

These are some of the reading and writing skills he needs to have, if he is to be independent in day-to-day life. Though he may not be able to read a text book or write the long answers to questions during formal examinations that other 20-year-old children would be able to do, this should not stop us from teaching him to learn to read and write up to a level that is required for carrying out daily activities. This is possible by using a different approach to teach reading and writing, other than the traditional method of starting teaching from recognition of alphabets, then combining them to form words and then sentences. You will read about these methods a little later in the Unit.

Let us take another example. We may want to teach a 14-year-old boy to be able to come to school, by himself, by taking a direct bus from his house to the school. The bus number he needs to take is 65. But, at present, he can read and write numerals from 1 to 5 only. Do we wait till he learns numerals up to 65 and then teach him to identify bus number 65? No, we cannot wait that long and neither do we know whether he will be able to learn the numerals up to 65. Therefore, since being able to identify the number ‘65’ is important (functional) for him to be able to travel by bus to reach the school, we teach him to identify the number 65. Teaching him to identify the number 65 is functional—it serves a purpose in his daily routines. Thus, unlike the other children of his age who would know numbers sequentially (i.e., in order 1, 2, 3 and so on), this child would know numbers that are important for him to function independently in day-to-day life. In fact, other children of his age would have mastered many mathematical concepts, but he may be taught only the basics of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. This will enable him to carry out shopping which involves money transaction, to determine the amount of various household items he needs to buy, operate his bank account and use the services in the post office.

From the above examples, the concept of ‘functional academics’ would have become clear to you. **‘Functional academics’ refers to the selection and teaching of that curriculum content which is of use to the child to function independently in various situations at home, in the neighbourhood and the community.** The purpose of functional academics is to equip the child to:

- gather relevant information from the environment;
- carry out tasks of daily living independently; and
- be able to protect himself.

Functional academics includes reading, writing and arithmetic. Under arithmetic, it involves the concepts of number, addition and subtraction,

as well as concepts of time, money, length, distance, weight and volume. We will now take up each of these activities and describe how these may be taught to the child.

In this Unit, we shall describe how to teach functional reading and writing and in the next Unit we shall focus upon functional arithmetic.

21.4 READING

Reading is the process of deriving meaning from print. When you read the printed words, you should be able to understand what you have read. For example, you may be able to read French since it is written using the English alphabet (i.e., its script is in English), but you are not able to understand what you have read because you do not know what that combination of alphabets means in French. Only when the person understands what he is reading, can we say that the person is able to read. **Teaching reading skills to the person with cerebral palsy will go a long way in enhancing his quality of life.**

Different approaches have been used in teaching reading. One commonly used method is the ‘whole word’ approach, also referred to as the ‘sight word’ approach. Another method is the ‘phonics approach’. In this Unit we shall describe the sight word approach in detail and briefly describe the phonics approach. **These approaches to reading can be used with all children—whether disabled or not.** The difference is that some children will be able to progress to reading complex sentences, paragraphs and books, whereas others may remain at the level of functional reading.

21.4.1 Whole Word Approach

Through this approach, the child first learns to recognize and read the entire word and later learns its spelling. For example, the child learns to recognize and read the word ‘water’ first and later learns the spelling ‘w-a-t-e-r’. Thus, he would be able to recognize the entire word ‘water’, though he would not be able to recognize the individual letters ‘w’, ‘a’, ‘t’, ‘e’ and ‘r’ and will not be able to combine these individual letters to form the word ‘water’. **In reading, the child learns to associate the image and the formation of the whole word ‘water’ with the sound ‘water’.** In other words, the child first learns the words as sight words—i.e., words that can be recognized by looking at them as a whole. Only later he will learn to recognize individual letters and read it meaningfully as ‘w-a-t-e-r’.

1) Selecting words for reading

How will you select the words that need to be taught to the child as sight words? The following guidelines can help you in selection:

- Select those words which the child uses often while speaking or which he understands, even though he may not be able to speak them.
- Survival words (for example-in, out, toilet, danger, words of the home address)
- Words commonly used or seen in his environment – eg, mama, papa, home, school.
- Words in the textbook currently being used
- Words which are of interest to the child
- Later on, words that would help him in functioning independently, even though they are not immediately useful, can be taught.

2) Step in Teaching Reading

Follow the steps described below while teaching reading using the whole word (sight word) approach.

Step 1

Before teaching the child to read the word, see that the child has learned to name the picture which that word represents. Thus, if you want to introduce the word 'dog', see that the child is able to identify the picture of the dog and can say the word 'dog'. In case the child cannot speak, he should be able to point to the picture of the 'dog', when shown one.

Step 2

When beginning to teach, select words which are very different in their sounds (for example, ball, pen, mango, grapes). Later, introduce words with some similarities (such as 'ball' and 'bag' which begin with 'b'; or 'pen' and 'pencil' which begin with 'p'). This is the principle of moving from 'simple to complex' which you read in Unit 6.

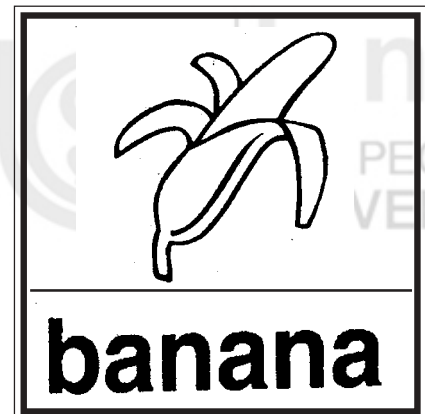
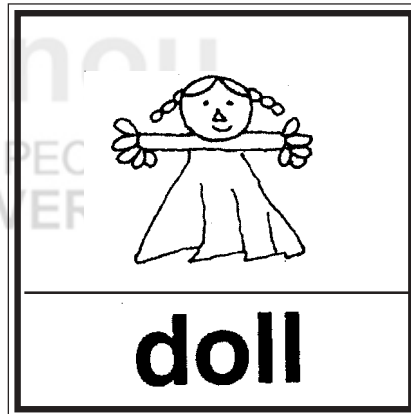
In the beginning, we need to select words which have high imagery level (for example, mango, ball, fan, brinjal). 'Imagery level' refers to the ease with which a word evokes a concrete picture in our mind. Thus, objects and pictures which we can see have high imagery levels. Low imagery words include abstract words such as 'beautiful', 'good', 'honest' and 'cruel'. These words convey feelings and ideas that cannot be seen. In some instances, we can provide high imagery to low imagery words by using them in context. For example, the word 'sour' refers to the taste of something. By itself, you cannot see 'sour'. But if you associate this word with an actual fruit, then it becomes easier to understand and remember. Thus if you say: "I ate grapes. They are sour", then the word 'sour' becomes concrete and the child can remember it better. Relating or associating a word with a concrete object or a concrete experience or a picture will facilitate development of high imagery level.

Step 3

One useful and successful strategy to use when teaching the child to read using the whole word approach is to pair (in other words, associate or match)

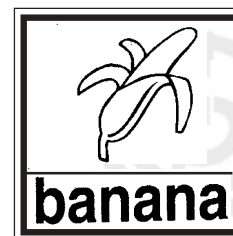
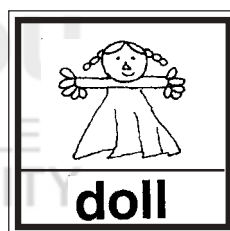
the word to be read with its picture. The following steps show how this is to be done:

- 3a:** Select two words which you want to teach using the sight word (whole word) approach. For example, you have chosen “doll” and “banana” because the child likes to play with the doll and likes to eat a banana. Also the pictures of ‘doll’ and ‘banana’ are very different from each other.
- 3b:** Paste the pictures of these two objects on separate cards and write their names below the pictures. These are picture-word cards. Make two picture word-cards for each object.

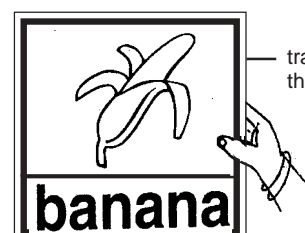


Picture-word cards

- 3c:** Now show the child one picture-word card and read its name by pointing to the word written below the picture. Place the card on the table.
- 3d:** Then show the child the second picture-word card, read the name by pointing to the word written below the picture and put it on the table.
- 3e:** Then take the other set of picture-word cards you have made for ‘doll’ and ‘banana’ and match these cards with the ones placed on the table. Remember to read the names while placing the card. For example, read ‘banana’ and place this picture- word card below the picture-word card .of ‘banana’ already placed on the table, as shown in the following illustration.



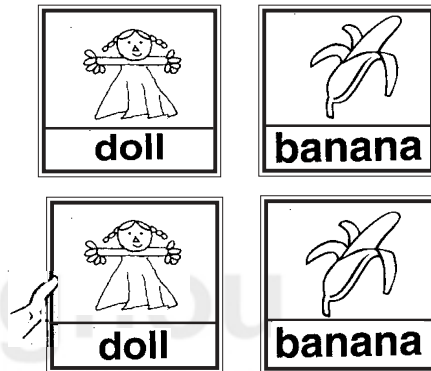
cards already placed on table



trainer matches the cards

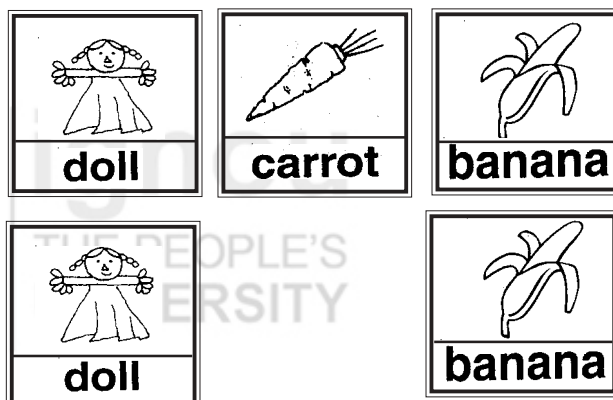
Trainer shows the child how to match

3f: Now give a set of picture-word cards to the child and ask him to match these with those laid out on the table, just as you did in step 3e. If the child matches one of the two cards, he can match the remaining one card easily, as shown below. **Learning to match the cards is the first step in reading.**



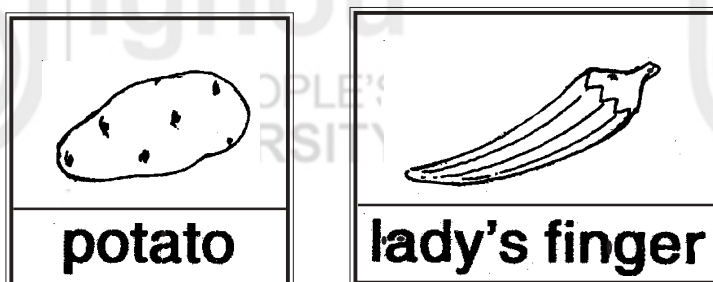
Child matches the cards

3g: Once the child is able to match picture-word cards of two objects fairly well, you can increase the complexity of the task by adding picture-word card of one more object, such as carrot, as shown below.



Increasing the complexity of the task

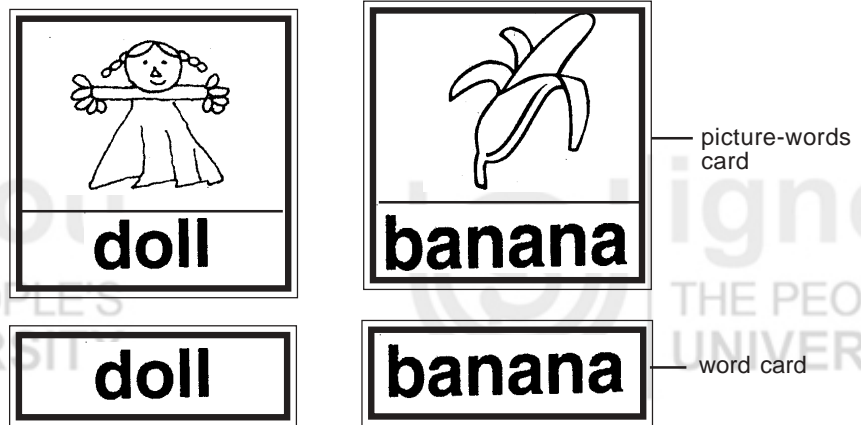
Thus, now he has to differentiate between three pictures and make two pairs (of 'doll' and 'banana'). In this way, keep increasing the complexity of the task by adding more picture-word cards. (Remember the principle of 'simple to complex' you read in Unit 6).



Adding two more cards

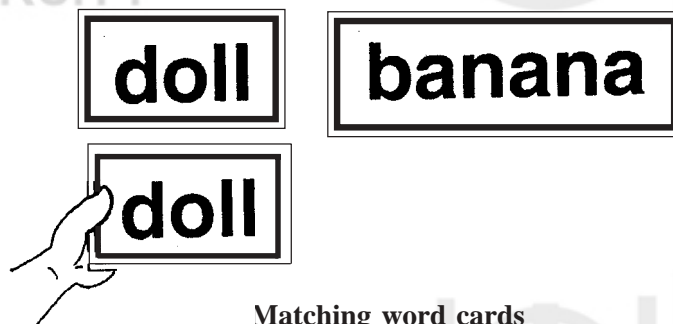
3h: Once the child learns to match picture-word cards of two objects (doll and banana) fairly well, you can introduce matching the picture-word card with only the word-card. This means that you have two types of

cards — one on which the picture of the object is drawn as well as its name written (picture -word card) and another with only the name of the object (word-card). This would be a more difficult activity for the child. Begin by asking the child to match one set of picture-word card and word-card (that of 'doll '); then add another set of picture-word :card and word-card (that of 'banana') and keep increasing the number, as the child is able to pair the cards.



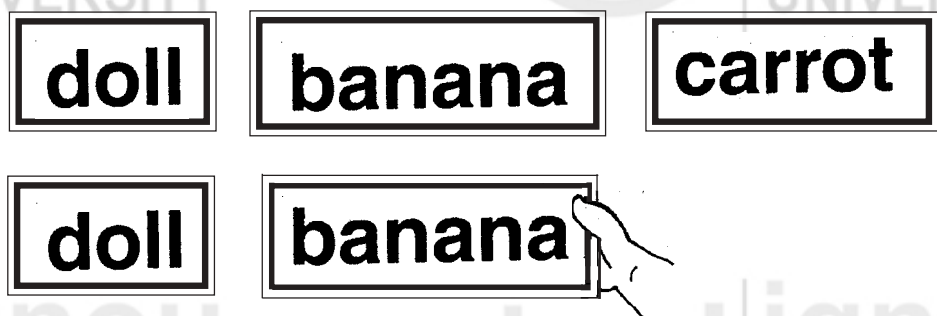
Matching picture-word and word-cards

- 3i:** While initially, you should select pictures that are vastly different from each other, gradually introduce the child to similar looking pictures. Thus, after the child can differentiate 'doll' and 'banana', you can introduce 'carrot' which is a little closer in shape to a 'banana'.
- 3j:** Once the child is able to match the picture-word card and word-card, increase the complexity of the task by asking him to match (pair) only the word-cards. Thus, make two words-cards of a particular object.



Matching word cards

As explained earlier, begin by asking the child to pair word-cards of two objects only, so that the child has to make two pairs. Once he can do this, add another pair of word-cards and so on.

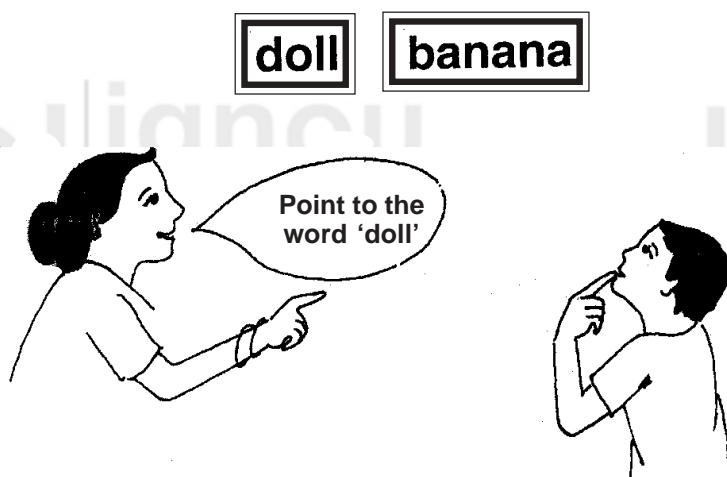


Increasing the complexity of the task

Remember to say the word aloud at every step of teaching pairing skill to the child. Only then will the child be able to associate the name of the object with the appearance of the written name (word) of that object.

3k: Once the child learns to pair the word-cards, teach him to identify the words. Identification of words is more difficult than pairing (matching). 'Identification' means showing word-cards to the child and asking him to point to a particular one as you say the name. Thus, you would place two word-cards ('doll' and 'banana') in front of the child and ask him: "Show me or point to the word-card 'doll'." **This is the second step in learning to read.**

Remember that when the child pairs (matches) the cards, he does so on the basis of the shape of the words. However, you have also been saying/reading out the word at each step during the matching activities, and so the child has learnt to associate (pair) the sound of the word with the appearance of the written word. This is what helps him to identify the word-card when you say its name.

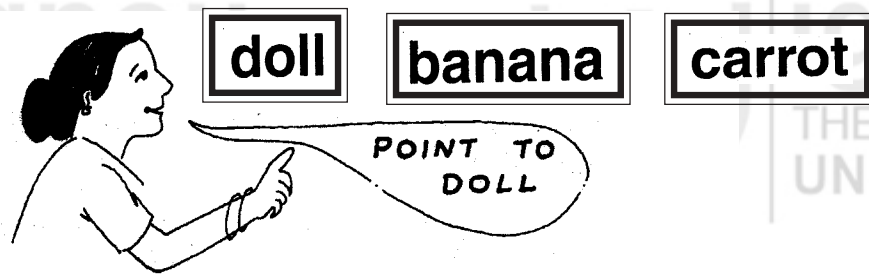


Asking the child to identify a word-card from a set of word-cards

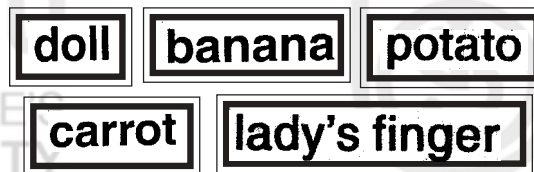
3l: While teaching the child to identify words, remember to follow the principle of simple to complex.

Therefore, begin by presenting two word-cards, for example, 'doll', and 'banana' and ask the child to point to 'doll'. When the child points to 'doll', the one that is left is 'banana'. So the child automatically points to 'banana' when you ask him to identify 'banana'.

3m: Now add one more word-card, to increase the complexity of the task—for example, word-card for 'carrot'. Now the child has to see three word-cards to identify 'doll'. When he identifies 'doll', he is still left with two word-cards between which he needs to identify 'banana'.

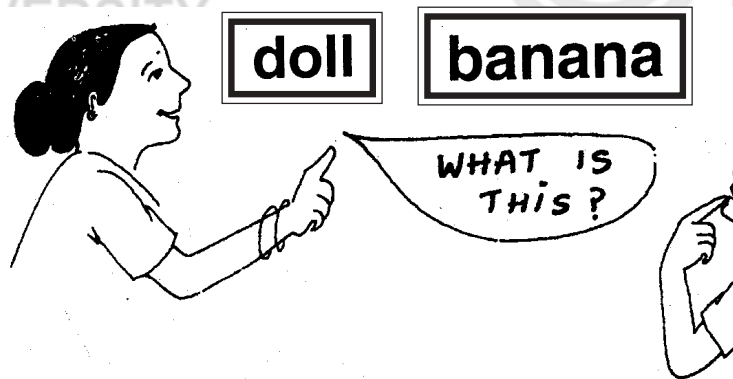


Adding more number of word-cards increases the complexity of the activity and the child gets to learn new words.



Adding more word-cards

3n: Once the child learns to identify words, ask him to speak out/read the words. Your question to the child at this stage would be: “What is this?”, while pointing to the particular word-card. The child can answer this by reading the word ‘doll’ or ‘banana’. **This is the third stage of naming.** Once again, begin by showing the child two word-cards and ask him to read one of them. Then keep increasing the number of word-cards. In this way, you can build the child’s vocabulary.



Teaching the child to read words

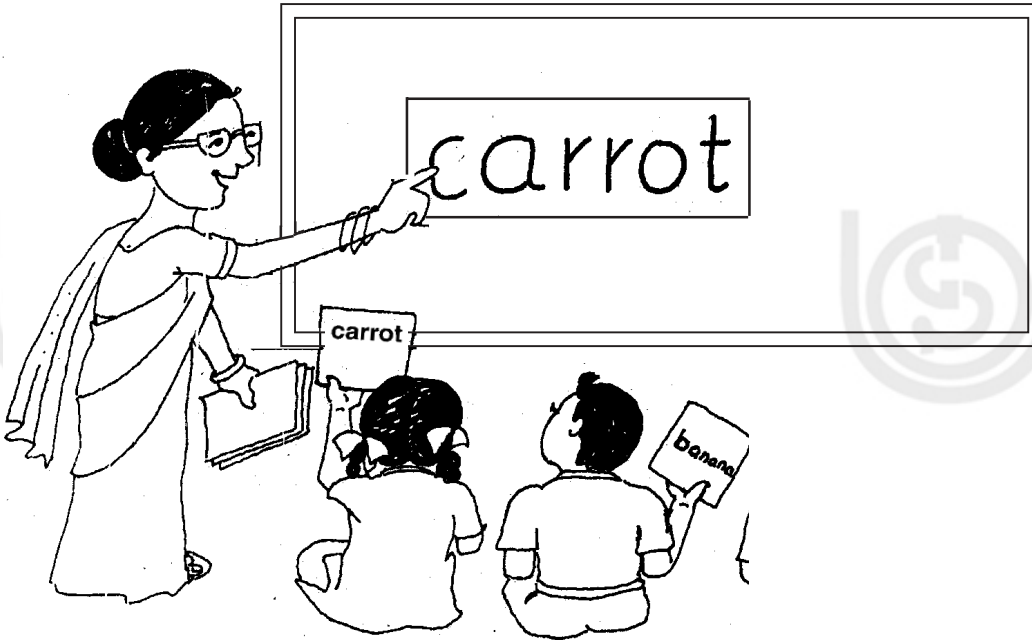
Thus, the child has learnt to read the words ‘doll’ and ‘banana’, even though he does not know the individual letters or spellings of these words. He has been able to do so on the basis of recognizing the appearance of the whole word and associating the appearance with the sound of that word.

Some Activities that will help in teaching reading of words

- Make two sets of word-cards. Distribute one set of word-cards, giving one card to each child. Make sure that each child has a different word-card. Keep the other set of word-cards with you.

From your set of cards, place one card on a board in front of the children and read the word so that all children can see and hear.

Ask the children to see their own word-cards and the one who has a similar card should come up and place it on the flannel board, as shown in the picture below.



Continue in this way, till each child has had his turn.

A variation could be to place a word-card on the board which none of the children have. Ask them to see their cards, if they have similar one.

- Divide the children into two groups, having two to three children in each group. Make two sets of word-cards, and give one set each to the two groups. Ask the children from Group 1 to place a word-card on the table. The children from Group 2 have to look at their word-cards, and locate a similar one with them. If they do so correctly, they earn a point. Then, a child from Group 2 places a word-card on the table and the children of Group 2 have to locate a similar one from their set. The game continues in this manner.
- Another activity is the following: Reverse all the word-cards and place them on the table. Ask each child to turn over one card, read it and find the matching one by turning the other cards. Make sure each word-card has a pair.

You can also do these activities when teaching the child to pair the picture-word and word-cards.

21.4.2 Phonics Approach

This is another approach to teaching reading. Let us first understand what is meant by 'phonics' and the 'phonics approach'.

Phonics is the term used for relating letters to sound. The **phonics approach** (also referred to as 'decoding') teaches reading through learning grapheme-phoneme association, i.e., the child learns what sound (phoneme) is associated with which letter (grapheme). After learning the sound of vowels and consonants, the child learns to sound them by combining them and then learns to sound out words by combining sounds and blending them into words. In this way, he learns the patterns of letter-sound relationships and learns to read by **learning how to pronounce and blend each letter in the word.**

Thus, in the whole word approach the person first learns to read the entire word and then learns to identify individual letter sounds, whereas in the phonics approach the person first learns the sound associated with each letter and then learns to combine them (blend them) to make words.

In Hindi, there is complete grapheme-phoneme correspondence. This means that the letter (grapheme) 'C' always represents the sound 'C'; the letter (grapheme) 'd' always represents the sound (i.e., phoneme) 'd'; the vowel 'vk' always represents the sound 'vk'. In Hindi, the name of the letter (i.e., grapheme) and the sound of the letter (i.e., phoneme) is the same and neither does the pronunciation of the letter change from word to word. Thus, the child finds it easier to learn the language. By and large, the name of the letter and the sound of the letter remain the same and the pronunciation of the letter does not change from word to word. Most Indian languages have a complete grapheme-phoneme correspondence, making it easy to learn them.

The English language is comparatively difficult to learn using the phonetic approach because here the vowels and consonants (i.e., the letters or graphemes) represent different sounds in different words. This is because the English language uses 26 letters (the alphabet) to make 44 sounds (phonemes) in various arrangements to convey meaning. For example the letter 'C' is pronounced |S| before 'e', 'i' or 'y' as in 'cent', 'cider' and 'cycle'. The letter C is pronounced |K| before other letters as in 'candy', 'cotton' and 'success'.

To take another example, the sound 'a' (i.e., phoneme |a|) can have many spellings. The following words show some of the many spellings of the phoneme |a| — bake, play, pain, weigh, great, they.

In the same way, the letter 'a' (i.e., grapheme |a|) can represent many sounds. Note the different sounds represented by the letter 'a' in the following words - 'bake', 'cat', 'father', 'above', 'war'. Thus, we see that many different letter-sound relationships are possible which makes the English language as one which has more irregularities than regularities.

Basic to learning reading using the phonics approach is the ability to discriminate the sounds of various letters. **If the child has difficulty in phonetic discrimination, he will not be able to learn to read using the phonetic approach.**

In fact, the use of the two approaches - sight word approach and phonics approach—should go hand in hand.

21.5 WRITING

Functional writing skills involve learning to write one's name, address, the names of objects used everyday, the words representing activities carried out daily and words to express one's feelings and emotions.

Learning to write proceeds through four stages:

- a) Tracing
- b) Joining dots, if needed.
- c) Copying
- d) Writing from memory (including learning spelling).

Let us read about each of these stages now.

21.5.1 Tracing

This refers to running the finger over the letters of the word in order to know how they are formed. The following are the steps to be followed when using the technique of tracing:

Step 1

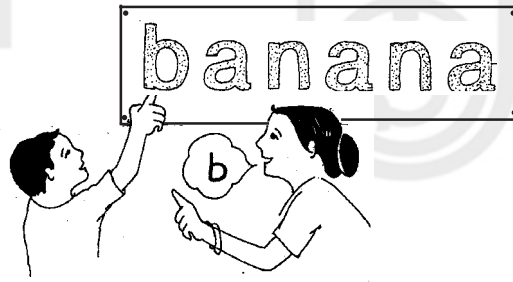
Prepare word-cards on which the letters made of sand paper have been pasted.



Word card with letters made from sand paper

Step :2

- 2a:** Help the child to trace each letter of the word by moving his two fingers over the letters.
- 2 b:** Remember to say the name of each letter (a, bee, cee, dee, ee, ef, etc.) after completing tracing of each letter in the word.



Tracing on sand paper word card

- You can also use sand to trace. Spread sand evenly on the floor and write the word. Ask the child to trace over the written word using two fingers.
- Later, write the word on the blackboard or slate, followed by writing the word in the notebook and ask the child to trace.
- Tracing can also be done using pencil/sketch pen/crayon. This involves moving the pencil or pen over the written word. To make the activity interesting for the child, you can put a carbon paper between two sheets of paper. Help the child to trace with the sketch pen/crayon on the word written on the first paper. The impression of the word created on second paper due to the carbon will motivate him towards writing.

Always remember to say the name of the letter after completing the tracing of each letter in the word.

Tracing the letters of the word and saying the name of the letters gives multi-sensory input to the child. When the child is tracing each letter in the word 'banana' with fingers, the child is seeing the shape of the letter 'b' (visual input), hearing the name of the letter 'b' (bee; auditory input) and feels the shape of the letter 'b' as he moves his finger on it (tactile input). In the process, the child associates the name of the letter (bee), with its shape and learns that this formation is called "b". Similarly, the child learns the other letters in the word. This will help him to identify and name individual letters in the word "b-a-n-a-n-a". Thus, using the sight word or whole word approach described earlier, he learns to recognise the word 'banana' as a whole. Now, by learning the names associated with each letter of the word, he is learning to read the word 'banana' based on its spelling. Thus, while tracing, the child learns the names of individual letters as well as the spelling of the word.

21.5.2 Joining

After sufficient practice in tracing, ask the child to join the dashes or dots to form the letter. This is more difficult than tracing but easier than copying letters written on the board. Ask the child to say the name of each letter as he joins the dots to form the letter.

banana

THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

21.5.3 Copying

The next step is copying the words written on- the blackboard or notebook. Thus, you write the word and ask the child to copy it.

doll	doll
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ignou
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Ask the child to say the name of the letter after copying each letter. If he cannot do so, you say the name of the letter. This will help him in identifying and naming letters.

Introduce one or two words only in the beginning – remember the principle of ‘simple to complex’.

21.5.4 Writing Words from Memory

The last stage in teaching writing is: writing the words from memory, without mistakes. To be able to do so, the child needs to learn spelling. This requires sequential memory, i.e., the child should remember the sequence of letters in a word. For example, if the child has to write ‘banana’, he has to remember that he should write first ‘b’ then ‘a’, later ‘n’ and then ‘a’, followed by ‘n’ and then ‘a’. If he misses any letter in this sequence, then he makes a spelling mistake.

ignou
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The following are the steps in teaching spelling:

Step 1

Select a word whose spelling you want to teach and write it on a card. This, as you know, is a word-card. Write the letters of this word on separate cards. These are letter-cards. Make two sets of letter-cards and word-cards.

ignou
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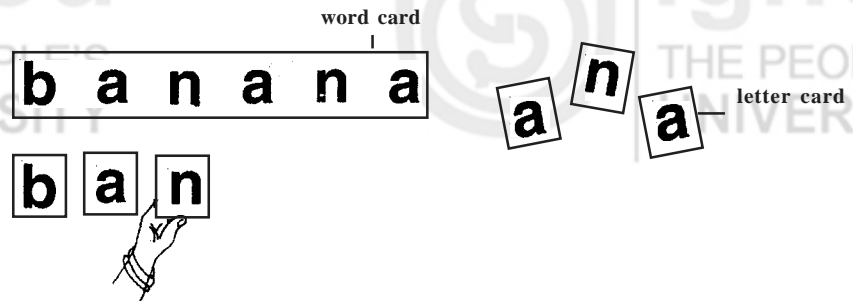
Step 2

Keep the word-card in front of the child and show him how to match the letters in the word-card with individual letter-cards.

Thus, point to ‘b’ on the word-card and say ‘bee’. Pick up the individual letter-card ‘b’ and place it under ‘b’ of the word-card and say ‘bee’. Then point to ‘a’ on the word-card and pick up the letter-card ‘a’ and place under ‘a’ of the word-card, saying the name of the letter ‘a’.

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Complete making the entire word in the similar manner and now say 'banana'.



Trainer matches letter-cards to word-card

Step 3

Now give the letter-cards to the child and ask him to match the letter-cards with the word-card, just as you did in step 2. Of course, initially you will have to help the child.

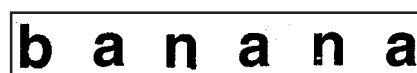
Step 4

Gradually, help the child to make the word 'banana' with the individual letter-cards without seeing the word-card.



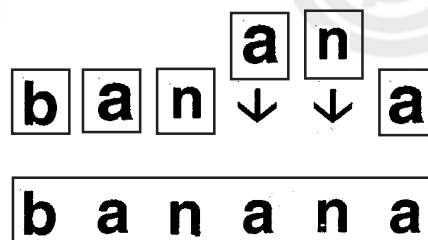
Child writes 'banana' using letter-cards without seeing the word-card

Then tell him to check his spelling by seeing the word-card.



Checking the spelling by seeing the word-card

To do so, tell the child to read each letter in the word-card and compare it with the word which he has made. In case the spelling is wrong, the child can correct his mistake by himself. For instance, in the example given below, he has to keep 'a' after 'n'. Tell him to shift the letter 'a' in place of 'n'.



Correcting the spelling

Step 5

After sufficient practice in writing the word 'banana' in this way, help the child to recall the individual letters comprising the word 'banana' in the correct sequence and ask him to fill in the missing letters in the word in the following way:

a) b a n a n _ _

b) b a n a _ _ _

c) b a n _ _ _ _

d) b a _ _ _ _ _

21.5.5 Teaching Reading and Writing Together

The most important thing we need to remember is that reading and writing activities should go together. That is: **learning to read a word should be followed by learning to write the word. Thus, keeping this aspect in mind, we can arrange the steps in learning to read and write, that you have read so far, in the following way:**

- The first step would be to 'teach the child to recognise a word using the 'whole word' (sight word) approach. Initially, when using this approach you teach the child to match the word-cards (reading activity). Once he is able to do that; you introduce him to tracing the word (writing activity). In the process, you are also saying out aloud the name of each letter. So, at this stage, the child can match the word on the basis of looking at it as a whole and he is also able to connect the names associated with each letter.
- The next step in reading using the 'whole word' approach is teaching the child to identify the word-card from a group of different word-cards. When the child is able to do so, introduce the writing activity of joining the dots of that word or copying that word.
- The last step in teaching using the 'sight word' approach is to teach the child to read. Here you give the child a few word-cards and ask him to read the cards. When he is able to do this, you can introduce the writing activity to teach spelling. .
- When the child uses a crayon or pencil to write, then you also need to pay attention to the following aspects:
 - Is the child holding the pencil correctly?
 - Is the child positioning the paper correctly?
 - Is the child's posture and sitting position conducive to good handwriting?
 - Is the child motivated to write?
 - Is the child consistently using the same hand during writing?

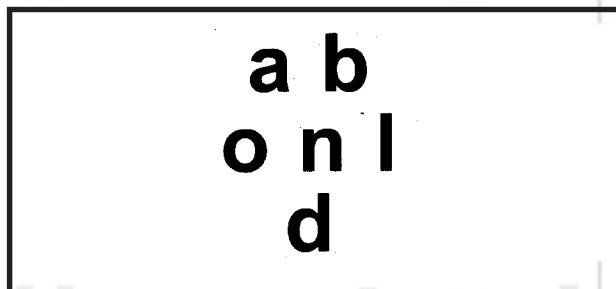
An analysis of the child's handwriting can lead to appropriate instructional strategies. You should pay attention to the following aspects of the child's handwriting:

- Letter formation
- Letter size
- Letter alignment
- Letter spacing
- Letter
- Letter omissions, additions, and/or substitutions
- Rate or speed at which handwriting is complete

It is very important to keep in mind the following aspect – For some children with cerebral palsy, there may be a mis-match between the reading and writing level. The child may be able to read sentences and paragraphs but may not be able to write. This could be due to limited hand function because of which the child is unable to hold a pencil properly or because of involuntary movements. To overcome these difficulties, we could either adapt the writing material - i.e. pen, pencil or chalk - so that the child is able to hold it and use it for writing. For example, use rubber bands on the pencil so that the child is able to grip the pencil and write, or use weighted bracelets on the child's wrist so as to reduce tremors or use visual and colour cues for a child who has perceptual limitations. Alternatively, you can use other methods – for example, writing using computers. In some cases, the child may not be able to write at all.

21.5.6 Increasing Vocabulary and Making Sentences

Once the child has learnt to read and write the words 'banana' and 'doll' on his own, he has learnt to read and identify six letters in the process.



a b
o n l
d

Can we make new words out of this? Yes, we can.



bad no lad
nod on

These are the new words which you can teach the child to read.

Make sure that the child understands the meaning of these words. This can be done by having appropriate pictures of words. You can make picture-word

and word-cards using these words as described earlier. The learning of these words will be faster since the child is already familiar with the letters. You can make a word file for words which the child can read.

- The next step in increasing the child's vocabulary would be to take two new words, which have letters other than the six letters stated above, and teach the child to read and write these. For example, 'potato' and 'bread'. To read and write these two words, the child has to learn the letters p, o, t, a, b, r, e, d. But the child has already learnt the letters o, a, b, d. The new letters he requires to learn so that he can read and write the new words are p, t, r, e. When he learns to read these two words (potato and bread), you can see how many letters he has now learned to read and write.

b, a, n, p
o, t, d, l, r, e

See how many new words we can make out of these 20 letters.

pot, load, road, pen
not, no, red, pet

Thus, you can keep adding one new word through which the child will learn to identify more letters and create more words. You can teach a number of words following the same procedure.

- The next step is to make phrases and sentences using the learned words.

A pot; This is a pot.
A pen; That is a red pen.

In this way, you can increase the reading and writing ability of the child.

The extent to which a child will be able to progress in reading and writing will depend on the mental ability and his land function of the child. For some children, the goal in reading and writing may be to equip them to read a few significant sight words that are important for their day-to-day living. They may not be able to progress to learn to read sentences and paragraphs. Those with higher cognitive ability may progress to reading simple story books, headlines in newspapers and magazines.

21.6 LET US SUM UP

- Many children with cerebral palsy benefit from a life skills curriculum during the primary years rather than the conventional academic

curriculum. The focus in the former is on teaching the child those concepts and skills that will be relevant and helpful in functioning independently at home, in the school, neighbourhood and community.

- The different components of functional skills curriculum are the following:
 - Functional Academics
 - Community Skills
 - Home Management Skills
- ‘Functional academics’ refers to the basic reading, writing and numeracy skills (i.e. basic literacy skills) that are required for independent living.
- Whatever you select for teaching to the child should be useful for him to function independently at home, in the school and the community.
- Sight word (whole word) approach is a strategy that has proved to be very useful in teaching reading.
- Some children who have higher cognitive ability will benefit from the phonic approach to reading.
- To teach functional writing skills, proceed through the stages of tracing, joining dots, copying, writing from memory.
- Remember that reading and writing activities should go together.
- At each stage, give the child a variety of experiences, so that he learns to generalize his learning.