

Why should you teach your baby how to read?

Eliane Leão, PhD

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WHY SHOULD YOU TEACH YOUR BABY TO READ?

PREFACE:

Why should a parent teach his/her baby how to read?

Because it is much easier to teach a little baby (6 to 24 month-old) to read at home than it is to teach a 6-year-old at school. Also, there are few activities as joyous for mothers and babies as reading 'play' sessions.

Reading is the basis of all learning and the acquisition of knowledge and success go hand-in-hand. By teaching your baby how to read, parents can open the door to all that is beautiful in this world instead of turning the child over to the current educational system hoping that the teacher will know what a brilliant mind this child has.

“Every child has, at birth, a greater potential intelligence than Leonardo Da Vinci ever used” Glenn Doman, author of *‘Teach Your Baby To Read’*.

We expose children to reading too late! By six or seven years of age the ability to take in spoken or written facts without effort is just about gone. In the same way that it is easier to teach a 5-year-old to read than it is to teach a 6-year-old, it is easier at 4 than at 5 ...and easiest of all for babies below one!!

Therefore, I personally recommend that you start as early as at 6 months of age.

In this complimentary eBook we will learn how to start teaching your baby/infant the 'Baby can read' method and how to incorporate it into a fun 'playtime' activity that takes little time out of the day. I will also relate the story of how these activities extended into a lifetime of fun and learning for my family.

Eliane Leao, PhD

Author of **"Babies Can (and did!) Read"**, a book relating and documenting the experience of early learning with three children, soon to be available in our website at <http://www.baby-can-read.com>

CHAPTER I. Glenn Doman's Method in Practice

To risk a new educational approach, a "Challenge to Literacy" was the least that I could do to contribute to the modifications of our antiquated educational system. To challenge the present day process of eliminating illiteracy is an obligation for all serious educators. Perhaps it was because of this conviction that I did not hesitate to teach my babies to read. What damage could be done? None whatsoever!

There is much controversy among specialists over the best methods to facilitate learning in infancy. While these controversies continue, we parents and educators, who are in contact with our children since birth, must not prevent the appearance of solutions.

We must struggle and find the solutions. We need to see the possibility of a new educational approach. Is it utopian to imagine 4 year old children entering school already literate? How much time and effort would be saved in society and in the educational system as a whole?

In the world of stimuli that they are exposed, the ability to read is a tangible concept, among others, that they manipulate (with their eyes) and as a concept is assimilated, absorbed. The experiences that follow from this are accommodated, resulting in a growing necessity to acquire always more of the concept, the ability to read. The activity of reading, which began as a game, becomes itself a game all the time. As the game is played more and

more, more does the child wish to dominate the game itself. The fact that reading is a spontaneous game, made real by the child's own mind, shows that mental activities are the only things that we really learn, and as such, lead the baby to dominate real objects and their abstractions during her integration in the family and in society.

Glenn Doman, the director of The Institute of Human Potential, in Philadelphia, initiated a clinical project, working in the beginning with children with brain defects, which led generally to unexpected results. He perceived that problems with the ears, eyes, feet, among others, could be minimized if the treatment began in the mind. He introduced an approach which emphasized the brain with the objective to detect and resolve problems of other organs.

In this difficult task, he discovered that even a child with millions of dead brain cells may perform and learn certain tasks that were considered impossible. He noted that a child with half the brain removed appeared to perform equal to another child with an intact brain.

The challenge presented itself in the form of the question "Why would not a child in normal conditions not have a better performance, perhaps a factor two better, than a child with cerebral problems?"

Asked was could be wrong with the education of normal children, Glenn Doman discovered that we were teaching children to speak, to listen,

but giving no opportunity for them to see the words, that that would lead obviously to the ability to read, if we were to do so.

He suggested to parents that they begin a “smooth revolution,” increasing letter size and showing them to children daily, in the form of a game. He verified that they would learn well, and successfully.

In his book 'How to Teach Your Baby to Read' Glenn Doman prepares the parent to confront the controversies and prejudices. He presents in Chapter 7 his method, which if only seen superficially, can appear as a useless ‘recipe’, which would lead to nothing.

In my book “Babies Can (and did!) Read”, I can say that I have tested such a ‘recipe’ and that it is not what it seems to be initially; this ‘recipe’ is, above all, a true instrument which will conduce to an effective revolution in human education, of the normal child. The application of Glenn Doman’s method to my three children, which will be briefly explained in the following pages, was the scientific validation in Brazil of the applied and experienced method, added to its respective results.

The results obtained and annexed at the end of my book will serve to foment new research in the educational field, and will give way to more inquiries into the workings of the educational system and in the ways we have been dealing with our children since early childhood. Let's all 'Challenge Literacy' and with it, increase our babies learning!!!

CHAPTER II. The Method Utilized: **Theoretical Support**

The Glenn Doman method is an innovative and provocative method of learning. In chapter 7 of his book entitled ‘How to Teach your Baby to Read’, Glenn Doman suggests the age at which the baby must start, which can be as early as 10 months of age.

Doman highlights the importance of the parents’ attitudes in respect to the activity to be developed, which must be one that this is a good game and not a job like any other. He explains that the sessions must end prior to the child’s loss of interest.

Doman also reminds us that the material, despite being simple, must follow specifications, once it is designed to attend to the fact that reading is a brain function, and as such must attend to the limitations of the baby, since the brain only has its reading function stimulated in the right way. He orients us on how to present the words, and how to draw the letters in them.

He turns next to a description of how to develop seven steps which he considers essential:

- 1. Visual differentiation (way of making the cards);**
- 2. Proper vocabulary;**
- 3. Vocabulary of the family environment;**
- 4. Vocabulary to build sentence's structure;**
- 5. Structured phrases and sentences;**
- 6. Reading of a real book (i.e., the first book);**
- 7. The alphabet.**

He then concludes the chapter saying that "*man is man essentially because he can read and write*".

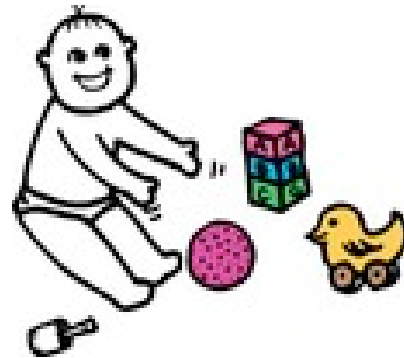
I will present in the following chapter how I adapted the Glenn Doman method to my three babies and how the activity developed into a lifetime of learning and fun!

CHAPTER III. Teaching Even Younger Babies

How to Read: The New Experience.

In the experience I have developed with my three children, I created an Adapted learning method based on Glenn Doman's described first four steps, as described in the previous chapter.

- **The visual differentiation (how to prepare the material);**
- **The proper vocabulary (cards which reflected the daily reality of the baby);**
- **The vocabulary of the family environment (which reflected the objects which the baby came in contact with at home, for his daily interactions), and**
- **The vocabulary to build sentence's structures (articles, prepositions, and adjectives).**



Sentences were not introduced as the Doman method suggests for the 5th step. The other steps, including the 5th, were suppressed in our

experience, due to our circumstances, since the babies' own preferences suggested that these steps would be skipped, indicating what the brain needed or not to experience.

When the babies completed reading the whole vocabulary, also knew the alphabet and already read elementary school books, traffic signals, and billboards in the streets.

However, the reading assimilation process was global, since steps 5, 6, and 7 of Doman's method were introduced simultaneously to steps 1, 2, 3, and 4. To explain it better, while I played with the babies the game of the cards, the whole family showed them reading as an object and how reading presented itself circumstantially in a community context (in the TV, the media, and the traffic signs).

The brain itself created mechanisms to find similarities and dissimilarities between some letters and others and some words and others.

As the process of stimulation in a family environment followed its course, the assimilation by the babies of the words which reflected their accommodation of contents ended up resulting in connections of objects and the objects' representations, in such an impressive velocity that when the babies were two years of age, they already could read and demonstrated a passion for the game of reading. The babies also demonstrated that they were ready for writing. By the same pleasurable process, which they felt while playing with an object until they tired of it, the babies played with words. However, the difference became that words were part of a very vast

grouping, which led the babies to combine them, discover them, and the game kept extending itself until the babies demonstrated that they could integrate it.

We realize that this game of learning will never come to an end, since it started as early as with a baby, the human being will tend to try to manage it for his whole existence.

This leads us then to say that teaching the child to read only at 6 years of age is to take away from him/her the opportunity of discovering the learning game of reading at the stage at which it could be best experienced – at the earliest age, when the brain elaborates its first mental schemes, and in which the mental activities still were not restricted in their development within the natural and potential perspectives.

It is very easy to establish the systematic of the method of how to teach a baby how to read and to wait for each phase of development to occur exactly as we expect. It is known that only the intention of the parents to teach their children how to read early on, can already result in facts that would better distinguish their children of those who did not try it. Even the most disorganized attempt will yield observable results, which are the most positive and encouraging results, it is worth highlighting! The procedure adopted needs to be very disastrous or complicated not to yield results. From the simplicity of this initiative, it is already possible to obtain better results than if one would start to teach the child only at 6 years of age. At six, it is already too late! The curiosity and motivational

potentialities of the brain would already by then be deactivated. The later you start, the harder it is the task to teach to teach the child how to read.

Glenn Doman, in his book "How to Teach your Baby to Read", affirms that the child prior to 5 years of age is able to absorb a tremendous amount of information and can accept information at an incredible rate. He says that the more information a child receives before completing 5 years of age, the most he/she retains; and that the child has tremendous quantities of energy for such. Besides that, the child at this age group has a great desire to learn. He/she can learn how to read and wants to learn how to read.

In my experience, I realized that the most important factor while initiating the process is to be certain that the parent(s) will have the proper attitude and adequate approach, or better, that the enthusiasm should be kept; and that the parent should not pressure or retard the steps in presenting information to the baby. The other factor is to be attentive to the size, format, and order of presentation of the material to be read by the baby.

Also of importance is the observation of when to start each reading session and when to end it. To start the session, the most adequate time is every moment in which the baby is in a good mood. Do not take him/her to read while cranky, crying, or dissatisfied. The activity of playing must be happy and playful both for the baby and the parent.

The time to end the activity of playing – which is the main motivation of the method, must be before the baby loses interest, so that in this way we can guarantee that the baby will want to repeat the activity and live the moment of happiness of being with the parent. During this moment, the baby enjoys the parent's company and plays with new knowledge and information. It is necessary to know exactly what the baby is thinking, or better, to know his/her reaction in order to stop each session prior to his/her desire to do so. The reader must imagine that this is impossible to be done. But it is not so. After a few sessions, it is possible to perceive exactly when it is time to distance the baby from the card. If you have more than one baby, you will see that each one has his/her own rhythm, as I have found out with mine.

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website at <http://www.baby-can-read.com>

CHAPTER IV. TEACHING BABIES HOW TO READ: **THE MATERIALS USED**

To teach your baby, the materials used can be elementary and very easy to prepare. In my case, I cut up card papers and used a red marker to write the words on these cards since red is more appealing for the baby's brain and the first written word was "*mommy*". I used my normal cursive handwriting, taking care to keep the same handwriting style throughout the process in order to facilitate the implementation of the method.

It was necessary to maintain the same handwriting since later on, when the vocabulary increased, it would be necessary to quickly create new cards to continue the activity and therefore keep up with the baby's needs and interest. Also, this was done so that the baby would be familiar with the handwriting style and would not be distracted by different styles, as when the words are written by other people. I suggest that during the implementation of the method, the reader do not use capital letters.

Only one parent should play with the baby. In our case, this responsibility fell to me since I spent the most time with the baby during the day. It is important not to allow the caregiver or other people to take the baby to play the reading game.

More importantly is to follow an important rule: initially, never ask the baby what is written. I would show the word and say: "Here is written

mommy”. That was all that was needed for each session. The following is an example of the card used in the playing activity.

The quantity of cards made depended on the velocity of which the baby increased his/her vocabulary.

In my case, when the baby reached a vocabulary of 100 words, he/she was almost completing 24 months. The baby also knew how to speak the majority of the words he/she could read. At this point I started presenting the same words in smaller sizes, combining them in pairs and even forming short sentences. The babies loved those combinations and read with much pleasure and satisfaction.

Glenn Doman advised that at this stage, the parents should make the first baby’s book at home, utilizing the vocabulary that he/she would have already compiled. I did not do this. This was because under my circumstances, many magazines, baby and children’s books were already being shown to the baby at other times in the day, when not doing the card reading games. And without us being able to determine the exact moment, the babies also were reaching for the magazines and children’s books on their own.

Babies consider learning how to read a fun and rewarding activity and once they start, they never want to stop!

CHAPTER V. Bits of Knowledge About Babies

In order to know your baby, you have to observe the following aspects:

- Care for the baby with love;
- The baby's intelligence manifests before language and thought;
- The baby assimilates and adapts until accustomed. Example: The baby repeatedly tries to place keys in lock and leaves it only once s/he has learned how;
- Affection: the baby learns through tenderness;
- There is no such thing as a purely intellectual action. Affection plus intelligence are not dissociated;
- The baby is always making new constructions even while s/he reads;
- "Teach" the baby all about the environment in which s/he lives, "teaching" her also to read, to listen, to speak, and to write;



- We do not teach the babies; we intermediate. It is the baby who learns;
- At each stage of her development, the baby requires the means to intervene competently in her world around and within;
- Play and playthings are the baby's main development medium. S/he learns with the culture s/he lives in;
- Every time the baby learns, s/he's developing;
- One stage of a child's development may be similar to another's but the individual systems of learning are different;
- Observe the baby playing and give her what s/he needs;
- The child lives a new world everyday and needs us to show it to her;
- Development Psychology's most recent positions have considered the baby as an active subject from birth;
- When the baby's born, s/he possesses all the potential qualities of a human being. But we cannot treat her as an adult. We have only to mediate the development of these qualities.

CHAPTER VI. Music and the Baby: *Go with Games!*

To have the most rewards from playing with Music and the baby, it is best to observe the following aspects:

- Young children tune in to the sounds of music;
- Their body movements also manifest happiness through music spontaneity;
- The baby may acquire musical concepts by playing with sounds, singing, moving, and listening;
- Experiencing music is a chance a baby has at pre-verbal learning;
- The baby should be encouraged to use his body as a musical instrument for physical experience;
- The child learns music by personal experience and discovery. It's necessary to promote positive effective growth, using success as a motivating factor;



- Knowing by perception of oral images and movement is the basis of music expression;
- The baby is only able to find the meaning of music when he acts on a piece of music;
- The discovery of her own movements and environment enables the baby to form concepts and function to order his inner musical world;
- The baby shows s/he has musical concept without verbalizing it when s/he displays consistent response to a certain class of stimuli;
- Play with music with your baby.

When choosing locomotion, you can experiment with walking, running, jumping, hopping, lunging, galloping, and skipping. The movements to the music can reflect energy, speed, and dimension, level in space, flow, and direction;

When choosing to use the voice, you can play low, high, somewhere in between. The voice can be loud, soft, somewhere in between. Playing with the sounds, one can stop immediately, last a long time, keep sounding, and get louder or softer. In order to make melodies, your voice can go up or down with different shapes, in steps with wider spaces, by sliding. It can be jerky, you can sing words, hum, whistle, go tra-la-la, go oo-oo-oo, or sound

sad and lonely. You can do what you want with your voice, and the baby will profit from your actions.

You can use the drum, the rhythm sticks, the tambourine, the triangle, the melody bells, the piano, and the guitar to stimulate your baby in order to have precocious experience with music.

Improvise, choose a song and sing it with the baby, and play music games with the baby (examples: Statues, marching, ‘Contrary Mary’, ‘Follow the Leader’, ‘either-or’, play what I play, etc.).

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Chapter VII. Developing the Baby's Brain

The following aspects are critical to our current understanding of Baby brain development:

- No two baby brains are alike and there is no such a thing as a set of right answers for enhancing the baby's intelligence. Be aware of the baby's interests and motivation and help s/he to act upon the objects.



- The observation of the baby's brain still difficult to do and it is not yet available to use in real-life situations. So, to know what is happening inside you baby brain we would need to use different kinds of computerized or caps of electrodes to display its structure. So... what we have left in order to enhance the baby's intelligence? - A combination of behavioral observation and good educational research to help us to get every act we experience with our babies right! This we can perform!

- Don't be afraid! Mix your personal experience, research results, and observe educational practices, and you will not have a chance to do it wrong with your baby!

- Remember that your baby is always constructing his knowledge of the world, and the more s/he uses his/her body to move, the better s/he shapes the power of his/her neural connections. The more s/he uses his/her functions, s/he accesses a dynamic process where his/her neurons communicate through electrical and chemical signaling, leading to creation of complex physical connections, that are all together what will become the structures of the brain. Remember – “Use it and you will have it!” This –phrase works for the babies, the ones who have the brain quality to shape itself every other minute in life!

- So, how to get every act we experience with the baby right? How to increase the baby’s neural connection, increasing the Baby brain development?
 - v Give them good nutrition – yes, we all already know it is important!

 - v Pay attention to their rest– we all know babies need sleeping schedules! But, do not impose it to the baby. It’s hers/his own necessity that counts;

 - v Care for their emotional stability! – This is a factor that makes all the difference. Care for it!

 - v Promote them time to play! – Playing for the baby brain equals exercise and the experimentation of the relationships of movements, space

and body. The baby needs to feel the world by going around places, seeing things, sensing spaces, listening and understanding sounds.

v Promote time to read – I am not talking about reading to the baby. I am talking about time for them to read! Giving the baby the opportunity to be exposed and to using symbols and signs that represents the culture and the thoughts that maintains the culture, are the most valuable experience for him/her. And it is right to learn to read! Even if the culture yet do not accept it!

v But take time! Wait for the baby's own rhythmic development to have enough time to do their own mental growing. The baby will do the magic! How? Observe the baby's inner motivation, and go with him towards his/her own interests. Time to learn all about cats? Dogs? Flowers? Family members? Girls? Boys? Toys? Give them all the time they to play and learn about them! Give them all the information they are affected to, attended to, interested in. Give them the opportunity to be observing, exploring the surroundings.

v Let him/her repeat what s/he is doing, how many times s/he needs to.

v Make games to promote problem solving (Ex: Where are we going? What color is the cat?... Keep talking to the baby all the time you can!...)

v Motivate with different colors; when talking to the baby add adjectives to objects, nouns and subjects. (Ex: Book?...Red book. Shirt? White shirt, etc...)

Brains respond to novelties better than to anything else. So, show the baby the uniqueness of everyday life. Show colors, forms, temperature, animals, fits, cars, words in public places, people of different ages, birds, and wild animals, etc...

All these activities will aid in healthy baby brain development!

CHAPTER VIII. CREATIVE BRAINS

CAN WE TEACH CREATIVITY? CAN WE OBSERVE IT? Yes!!!!!!!

Creativity can be taught, and creativity can be tested. It can be viewed as a product, but it is also a process... An intellectual process! And the most important information about creativity we have when the subject of creation is baby is that the child creates his/her knowledge about the world inside himself/herself. S/he uses his/her own organization through creation, affectively and cognitively. S/he is in action creating internal schemes, structures and systems. We are only the ones who intermediate! And we have a better information: - That we can help him/her to create special knowledge about the world by stimulating him/her to learn everyday!

If the baby is generating and inventing his/her knowledge about the world by facing problems and approaching problems that stimulates him/her, his/her inner motivation grows towards more involvement with his/her surroundings, context and circumstances.

YES, s/he has creative brain, with power to look at everything and look to bits of information from fresh perspectives. What are the paths and new ways s/he has to put patterns experience together? By experiencing, acting upon and creating from reality s/he is involved

with. And who are the intermediaries between the baby brain and the world? We, the parents!!!

The maximum you can do for your baby brain is to promote experiences of touching, smelling, hearing, listening, observing; it is to perform and to let the baby perceive learning as an adventure! Guide the baby to seek wholes, patterns and relationships in objects and people! Expose him/her to music, art, drama and language. Remember, let the baby try! THIS...THE BRAIN UNDERSTANDS!!!!

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CONCLUSION

We hope that the reader agrees with us when we say all these methods described above constitute a new paradigm for education: reading practice prior to speech acquisition. Babies are, at first, capable of reading and listening simultaneously. Secondly, they can read, listen, and write, to finally being able to read, listen, write, and speak – in this order.

This learning order shows that it's possible to facilitate and accelerate the rhythm of cognitive development, as well as give the baby access to formal reading. When the baby starts speaking, s/he has already accomplished (being in the motor-sensory stage) many activities expected only from other developmental stages.

With the mediator's help (in this case, the mother) much earlier than it is expected, the baby executes and constructs steps well before what has only experienced by older children up to now, contradicting the current cognitive developmental theories while *shining light on the importance of the parents intermediation on education*.

And early learning by fun and easy activities with the parent(s), including music exposure has a positive effect on the baby's development.

Let's start teaching our babies to read today!

Eliane Leao, PhD

Eliane is the Author of **“Babies Can (and did!) Read”**, a book relating and documenting the experience of early learning with three children, and also containing all the tips and tools for you to start teaching your baby today.

Also, this book brings for the first time to the field a wide background of research to support your decision to improve your baby’s potential by teaching hum/her how to read.

This book will soon be available in our website at

<http://www.baby-can-read.com>