

On this let the children be made to explain the forming and differences of these letters as follows:

Long line, round part or loop on the right at the bottom, *b*; long bar, round part on the left at the bottom, *d*; long upright line, round part on the right at the top, *p*; long line up and down, round part on the left at the top, *q*; *b* and *d* face each other and below; *p* and *q* face each other above, *b* on the right, *d* on the left at the bottom; *p* on the right and *q* on the left at the top. Follow these explanations by questions, till their forms and positions be made familiar to the children.

In all these exercises the children may be taught how to trace with their finger in the air the outline of the figure before them. This tends to secure attention, and to promote clearness of conception.

When they can distinguish and describe letters singly and by comparison, the teacher can then proceed, and very advantageously, to teach the names of letters, associated with descriptions, putting the description generally first, beginning with the first class, viz: *i*, *j*, *l*, *f*, *t*, *r*. The questions to be put as follow: The first letter is *i*, repeat the name; what is over it? a small dot. What is dotted? the *i*. To this add the description top dotted *i*; and ask again,—top dotted, what? where is the dot of the *i*? what has a dot over it? what kind of a letter is *i*? Let the scholar then add the whole. Short top dotted *i*; and be immediately asked—what kind of letter is top dotted *i*? what short upright letter has a dot over it? Such questions should be repeated, till the children know, and can readily give the description of the letter with its name. The children are to be questioned similarly on all the letters and made to point each out as exercised upon it, in words presented to them, in which it is. Such questions serve to interest the pupils by exercising their minds, and they greatly assist their memories by associating the name of the letter with its description.

While the children are put through the preceding exercises, the practice-board should be much used, printing on the board at first only *one* letter, to be named and described; but as they become more familiar with letters two or more may be given at once, but in such a way as to exercise the understanding and faculty of accurate observation, as much as possible. The capitals are to be taught as the pupils come to them in reading, but never till all the small letters are perfectly familiar to them.

When all the letters are known, they should next be taught the sounds of the double letters and the terminations, one by one; illustrating their uses by teaching some short words, in which they occur.

During this, and indeed every stage of progress, the utmost care should be taken that the children, while they are in school, should never be idle. They should have a few minutes of recess, now and then; but industry and attention should be strictly enjoined while they are in the school. The following hints will assist the teacher in finding employment for this class both at home and in the school, when not under the teacher's training, or the teaching of some person at home:

10. They may be made to count the number of any of the letters which the teacher wishes them particularly to learn, in a paragraph or page.
20. They may be made simply to name these letters to themselves, or to each other.
30. They may be shown how to exercise themselves in forming letters by finger positions, tracing their forms in the air, or in ascertaining by leaving out parts of letters, or adding something to them, what other letters may be formed.
40. Making letters on slates—suitably ruled—both in printed and written form, will be found an excellent exercise. But the slates require to be so ruled as to guide them in shaping the letters.
50. These exercises may be varied by giving a few figures, at any one time, to make, having their slates suitably ruled; keeping them interestingly engaged will train them to habits of diligence while in the school.

The teacher is required to consider the principle upon which these methods of teaching the alphabet, and training the mind are founded, that he may be able to carry it out intelligently, and also vary its application, without lessening its power. It consists in subjecting the alphabet to the principle of analysis,—by creating an artificial association of ideas between the forms and the names of letters; and principally, by so arranging these as to subject them to the powerful operation of catechetical exercise.

N. B.—Following up this method in teaching the alphabet, which is, perhaps, one of the most abstract, difficult, heartless exercise in the whole range of education, renders the task to children interesting and easy.

2. First step in teaching to read.

When the children's minds have become, by the preceding exercises, active and vigorous, and when all the letters and terminations have become familiar, they may then be taught to read simple sentences, each containing some plain easily understood idea. But must not be allowed to pass a single sentence till mastered as that respects both the *meaning* of every word, and its *distinct reading*.

Let me explain the method to be pursued by the following sentence:

"Robert reads well."

First, question the children on the different letters of the words in this sentence, and continue the questioning till you are satisfied that they really know them, and can both name and describe them. This prepares them for naming them without hesitation, as they are arranged in the words of the sentence. Point out to them then how the letters form the first words: *Robert*, by repeating the letters, giving them their *power sounds*, as pronounced in the word, and then pronouncing them together—*R, o, b, e, r, t*, *Robert*—first simultaneously, then individually, repeating the letters and the word, till they become familiar with the word and know its meaning. The next word is then to be gone over in the same way, and when they know it, connect it with the first—*Robert reads*. Then question them on the two, united,—*Robert reads*. Who reads? what does he do? what is the name of the boy who reads? on getting them to answer these correctly and readily, proceed to the last word—*well*. Make them familiar with it in the same way; and when the three words—*Robert reads well*, are readily recognised, each in its place, read them off in connection, they following simultaneously, and then individually. But take care in reading them off, that the voice is fully brought out, and that the reading is free and easy, without the least hesitancy.

The same thing is to be done with each word and sentence in its order, first pronouncing words and reading the sentences before them, thus setting them a *correct example for imitation*. This is training them to read and how to use their voices properly. Much of the teacher's success depends upon attention to this recommendation.

When words of two syllables are to be taught, the syllables are to be taken separately, as in monosyllables, and then they are to be put together; the teacher explaining to them how they form but *one word*, though made up of two parts. This exercise is to be continued till they understand how words of two or more syllables are divided, as we pronounce them, into portions, yet making but *one word*.

When they can read simple sentences easily and understand their meaning by questioning, they should then go back to the beginning again, for the purpose of reading and becoming more familiar with the explanation of words. Going over the ground again is not keeping them back; it is preparing them to advance rapidly. Indeed, this is the grand starting point upon which the teachers success greatly depends. Going over the same lessons again may be done as follows: make the child at the head of the class read the whole sentence; then question him on the meaning of the first word, substituting his meaning for the word, and showing him how, in doing this, the sense is not changed. If he cannot satisfactorily do it, the next should be asked, and whoever gives a correct meaning should go up. The next child is then made to read the whole sentence, *omitting the word that has been explained*, explaining the first word of what he reads, and substituting for the word as before. Go on in the same way with every one in the class, taking care that *one word only* occupies the attention of the class at *one time*.

When the children can read the sentence with each of the explanations, substituted for the words they explain, they may then try to read it with two, then three, and lastly with all the explanations together; each reading from his book the intermediate words, inserting the explanations one after another from memory, and upon making a mistake losing a place, if his neighbour who next tries it, makes none; he trying again, and if unsuccessful again losing a place as before. This is to be done with every sentence in its order, by which the pupils will become familiar with reading and the meaning of what they read, as well as with the powers of their own minds.

The teacher should study the philosophy of these initiatory exercises, that he may be able to vary their form to suit circumstances, without neutralizing their effects.

It consists principally in these three things:

10. In enlisting the natural sagacity of the child in his own behalf; and training him, by considering the powers of the letters