

Section 1, Concerning the Nature of the Learning to Read Process

Chapter 1

Learn about the Learning-to-Read Process by Teaching Yourself How to Read (and Write) Upside Down

When you get to the next paragraph, please turn this book upside down and continue reading. In fact, we want you to always read each chapter of the book upside down first. Then you can turn your book right side up. Then, and only then, read it normally. You should notice the vast difference in comprehension! You will then appreciate the role fluency in word recognition plays in comprehension.

Are you now reading your book upside down? If so, continue on. If not, go back and read the first paragraph again.

Are you now reading your book upside down? Good. I would hate to say that you're not very good at following directions.

If you are really interested in finding out for yourself how difficult it is for students to learn to read and write, I strongly advise that you begin now to teach yourself how to read and write upside down. After a year of practicing several hours a day, I can only say that I am in the process of mastering the art of reading upside down and writing upside down.

I wish I could say that I started to do this because I wanted to learn more about the reading and writing process, but I can't. I got started simply because I enjoy working face to face with the student that I am tutoring. I find that I can observe my student's eye movements and facial expressions far better when I am seated across a table from him than when I am seated at the student's side. I also sensed that my students seemed more comfortable with a table between us. I know that I just hate it when someone is looking over my shoulder when I'm reading.

At any rate, it was my preference for working across the table with students that sort of forced me into learning to read upside down. What I discovered in the process of learning to read and write upside down is that I encountered all the classic textbook symptoms of "dyslexia." I read *was* for *saw*, I read *woman* for *women*, I even read *spider* for *rapids* and I just couldn't read the word *shoes* at all. I sat and I sat. I knew all the letters. I sounded out sh as /sh/ but all I could come up with was "shows" which rhyme with "toes" and "goes" or "SHOW eez" a nonsense word that rhymed with Chloe's. Here I am, a grown man, a widely known expert in the field of reading, knowing all the letters s-h-o-e-s and not being able to read the word *shoes* until in absolute frustration I turned the book right side up. From that point on, I have always been able to read the word *shoes*. But, I'll never forget the feeling of embarrassment when I couldn't even figure it out in context!

That particular feeling of being embarrassed has occurred many times since then. Many words that I take for granted as "easy words," such as *easy*, *precious*, *special*, *institutional*, etc., I couldn't sound out or figure out using context clues. Learning to read upside down is still a humbling experience for me. One thing that I have learned is: to read fluently takes practice, practice and more practice so that you don't read Sheraton as "She rat on". And, heaven only knows what Freud would make out of my first rendition of reading the word *therapist* when I read that word upside down as a compound word. Since then I have made a collection of words that could be compound words that are not—words like *notice* (not ice), *her-ring* (her ring), etc.

Because I always like my students to see what I'm writing as I am writing, the only way I could do that and still sit across the table from my students was to learn to write upside down. So, I blithely

bounced into printing upside down using the "easy" stick ball routine. Sure enough, I created real problems for myself. I wrote b's for d's, p's for q's and g's. If my only interest had been in becoming proficient at writing upside down, I should have started with D'Nealian™, which my good friend Don Thurber developed and ultimately sold to Scott-Foresman. In case you're not acquainted with this system, it is basically a system of manuscript printing in which almost all the letters are constructed so that cursive becomes merely a linking of the letters, a natural easy-to-learn extension of the printing process. Perhaps the best part of the system is that there are distinct kinesthetic differences between letters—not just a visual location of a stick and a ball.

But, I didn't practice what I have always preached. Instead, I tried to learn how to print upside down the stick-ball way and for a while I thought I would never correctly write a 2 or a 5. Then, when I switched to writing cursive upside down, I had to start learning all over again. Even though it is much easier to learn to print upside down using D'Nealian™ and ultimately to write cursive this way, I plead with you not to forgo the truly masochistic pleasure of learning for yourself the problems that the stick-ball method of printing creates. If you're right-handed, you'll learn what a left-hander experiences—how messy it is writing when your hand keeps covering up what you're writing. If you really want to understand the problems of learning to write (or print) what you should do is to use your opposite hand, left if you're right-handed and right if you're left-handed and learn to write upside down at the same time. I know that it isn't easy. I have done it, and I now am far more sympathetic with the struggles of youngsters to master writing.

I know that if I have to concentrate on how a letter is formed when I'm writing upside down, that concentration interferes with my automatic spelling of a word. I also know that if I ever have to think about how a word is spelled, that concentration interferes with my train of thought while composing. Handwriting must be automatic. Just as a good basketball player dribbles and shoots without having to concentrate on how to dribble or how to hold the ball, that automaticity⁴ came only as a result of practice, practice and more practice. I tell my students that the reason Michael Jordan is so good is that he has missed more shots in one week than I have attempted in my entire life. There must be drill in school on the basics.

In any case, I do believe that before any researchers are allowed to publish their theories on how reading and writing should be taught, they should demonstrate that they have taught themselves how to read and write upside down as well as they can read and write right side up—or almost as well. I think that all who do will discover, as I did, that there are different types of words, such as the "SIMPLE," the "FANCY," the "INSANE," the "TRICKY" and the "SCRUNCHED UP," and that learning these five different types of words involve different processes of the computer brain.

**In order to properly understand the concepts
involved in this textbook,
it is essential that you continue to read the following passage on the
next page UPSIDE DOWN
and answer the questions at the bottom
while still reading upside down.**

⁴ I apologize for using this "awful" word as one of my editors calls it. I remember how my daughter Linda went into hysterics when she first heard Professor Downing at one of his lectures use and re-use the word *automaticity*. However, his concepts of the three stages of learning, cognitive, mastery, and automaticity are so well entrenched in the jargon of reading teachers, that I feel I should use it on occasion if only to let the experts know I can use their jargon, too.

“Simple” Reading Comprehension Test with “Fancy” Words Encoded

Danyol was a straight-A student in the ealumenturi school in Ghyladelgheu, and he credits his mother for his iniciull success. She read to him as a young child and demanded that he get good grades. She died when he was 8, and Danyol moved to Uachingtan to live with this grandmother. He said she didn't seem to care about his eadeukecion. Danyol became respensable for the care of his grandmother, his younger brothers and sisters, the cleaning and grocery shopping. His cheaurs often kept him out of school. He got hopelessly behind and eventieually dropped out.

Because his yllyterusi has kept him from getting anything better than low paying quosteaudyul jobs, the 24-year-old decided to sign up for a reading course at the Reading Center at George Uachingtan Eunivurcuti.

"This is basiqueuli a paper-and-pencil kind of town" he said in an intrevyeu. "Eadeukecion is necessary to survive."

Danyol might be considered an enomili in a nation that prides itself on a cictim of eunivurcull publique eadeukecion and on the multyteud of callijes that dot the country.

But he has a lot of camponi. One out of every four high school freshmen evenieually will leave school befor receiving a dypleauma. Many of these dropouts are unable to read well enough to get along in sosyiti. Some grajeuits are funkssionleli yllytaryt too. They can't understand instrachssions on dayngierus kytchyn produx, phedirle income tax forms, job applucacions, and medisyn bottals.

Typical comprehension questions that you should be able to answer correctly.

1. Who did Danyol acqueuse of not caring about his eadeukecion?
2. When did he say, this is basiqueuli a paper-and-pencil kind of town?
3. Why might Danyol be considered to be an enomili?

On the following page there is cheat sheet to help you.

Continue reading upside down.

The following is a cheat sheet to help you score 100% correct

y=i i=y / al=ol=le=el=ul=ull

e=ea /a,e,i,o,u,ou,=u

gh=ph=f / i,e = long e

c=s/s=c

ti, ci, ssi, xi, ch = sh

u=w / ch=sh / an=on=un

ea=e/ eu=yoo/ e = a/ cion = shun

i=y /

qu=k / eau = o

cheurs = chores

Eunivurcuti = University

enomili = anomaly

publique = public

callijes = colleges

dypleauma = diploma

grajeuits = graduates

instrachssions = instructions

kytchyn = kitchen

applucacions = applications

acqueuse = accuse

Danyol = Daniel

ealumenturi = elementary

Ghyladelgheu = Philadelphia

cictem = system

iniciull=initial

Uachingtan = Washington

eadeukecion = education

yllyterusi = illiteracy

quosteaudyul = custodial

eventaieually = eventually

basiqueuli = basically

eunivurcull = universal

multyteud = multitude

camponi = company

sosyiti = society

funkssionleli = functionally

dayngierus = dangerous

phedirle = federal

medisyn = medicine

bottals = bottles

Now go back and read upside down the passage one more time. It will be easier, now that you have had some help, the same type of help a teacher might give in a classroom by writing new words on the board and telling the class what they are. After you have done this, read the test **RIGHT SIDE UP** and you will see for yourself how much easier it is to break a new code — if the first code is automatic.