



Early literacy in braille with tactile illustrations

Criteria for a book

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General starting points

Target group

Severely visually impaired and blind children with a cognitive age of 5-8 that have been referred for learning braille.

Children need to enjoy reading if "early literacy" in braille is to be achieved. In this series there is a more explicit educational accent for beginner braille readers.

Name

The name of this series is "Feel your Reading Book" (in Dutch: "Voeljeleesboek").

Target group

Young children from the age of approximately five who have been referred for learning braille and who are ready for early literacy.

These are very simple books, in which the simplest braille letters are used on the right-hand pages. The books are for children starting to read, in which a specific braille letter structure is used. These braille letters are used to form the first braille words and simple, short sentences, supported by tactile illustrations. There is a simple story form, because young children enjoy stories.

The books are also designed for reading together. On the left-hand page there is a story or rhyme which matches the first braille words on the right-hand page.

These stories/rhymes are suitable for a braille reading development level of 0-15 months.

Parents or classmates can read out these stories, and after between a year and eighteen months of learning to read, the children can read this level themselves.

Tactile illustrations

The tactile illustrations make reading more enjoyable and support learning to read, just like ordinary illustrations do for sighted children. The tactile pictures give the blind child an idea of what the book is about, even before the child is capable of really reading it.

Coming into contact with tactile illustrations is very important, because blind children do not automatically encounter any pictures in their environment. After all, illustrations are always visual and are not suitable for blind children. Because the children are still learning

to make the transition from a concrete form (for example, a ball) to a tactile illustration of a ball (2D), a tangible object also accompanies the book.

Parents

Parents can also play an important role in stimulating learning to read. With these books they too can become involved in the braille reading process in a playful way, together with their child. A braille alphabet and an instruction sheet for parents are included with the books.

Key aspects of the content

- The subject is suitable for the age group.
- The subject is based on the world as it is experienced by a severely visually impaired or blind child.
- Each book has a main character or object.
- There is a difference in reading level between the right-hand and left-hand pages:
 - The right-hand page is intended for early literacy: for starting to learn the first braille letters (reading experience of 0-6 months). Pre-school children and children starting in group three (Grade 1 Primary school) can read this themselves.
 - The left-hand page is intended for children with a level of reading experience of ½-1½ years. This page can be read by children who have been taught to read up to and including group 3 (Grades 1 and 2).

Right-hand page: AVI start*

- The most simple braille letters are used: a, b, l, k, g and p, building up to other letters: (c, é), d, e, i, s, t, v, n, o, r, u, (h, j, f, z is also possible, but not in combination with mirror-image letters).
- Every page has a simple braille word and a sentence in which the word appears and can be recognized (like bag ball car cab).
- In order to introduce children to the correct reading technique (feeling from left to right with 6 fingers in a row) we place the word twice in a dotted line at the top of the page. The sentence using the same word is placed lower down the page. A thick strip is placed above the word at the top of the page and above the sentence. The strips can, for example, be made out of 2 mm foam.
- The first version of the word in the dotted line at the top of the page has spaces between the letters, so that the child can feel the letters separately. The word is then repeated, but without the spaces.
- A 2 cm margin is retained under the sentence.
- The same word is used in the sentence, so that the child will recognise the word.
- The sentence matches the tactile illustration.
- The sentence is short and has no capital letters or punctuation marks.
- Preferably, the word comprising the subject of the book appears on every page.
- We assume that the child will eventually be able to read the words that are used.



- There is no printed text on the right-hand pages, so that parents also become engaged in recognising the braille letters.
- There is a fold-out braille alphabet for parents at the front of the book.
- The information for parents, on how they can use the book, is at the beginning of the book.
- On the first page there is a tactile illustration of the main character or the object that the book is about.

Left-hand page: reading level from ½ to 1½ years

- Simple text of a story or rhyme which matches the right-hand page.
- The name of the subject (the main character or object) is easy to read.
- The text can be read out by a parent or teacher, while the child examines the tactile illustration on the right-hand page.
- Printed text above the braille, so that parents can read as well if the child holds their fingers on the braille line.
- There are no more than 10 lines on a page.
- The pages are numbered in a fixed place, so that the child also encounters numbers in braille.
- Extra line spacing is used between the lines.
- The book states whether the left-hand page is suitable for a reading level of ½ or 1½ years M3 or E3 (these are criteria of AVI reading levels).
- If M3, then the sentence fits on one line. There are no capital letter symbols or punctuation marks!
- If E3, there are capital letters and punctuation marks, such as comma, full stop, question mark and similar. Extra line spacing is used.
- Text is written at AVI 2/AVI M3-E3 level.*

* "Analyse van Individualiseringsvormen (AVI)"; this means that an analysis of the child's reading level is performed.

Guidelines for reading experience from 0-6 months (middle of group 3)

- Reads sentences with approximately 6 words without capital letters.
- Reads short sentences with one sentence per line.
- Does not read composite sentences.
- Easily names all graphemes.
- Reads monosyllabic words without difficulty.

Guidelines for text for reading experience of 6-15 months (end of group 3/end of Grade 1)

- Reads sentences of approximately 7 words.
- Reads one sentence per line with capital letters.
- Easily reads composite sentences with conjunctions.

- Easily reads duosyllabic or composite words (ro-ver, foot-ball).
- Easily reads two or three consonants in front and/or behind.
- Reads plurals easily.
- Reads known letter combinations easily.

Guidelines for the design

- It is a real book.
- The book should be accompanied by an object, if possible attached to the book.
- There is a box with a lid over the book and the object. Two long covers extend out at the top, as long as is necessary for the box (the pages are smaller in size). It forms an attractive whole.
- The braille word is also on the cover.
- Solid cover and sturdy pages.
- Turning over the pages has to be easy, and the book must be able to lie flat.
- Printed text is only placed on the left-hand page and is printed above the braille.
- Ideally, no imprints can be felt on the right-hand pages from the braille on the previous page.
- There are simple illustrations which are made tactile by the use of different textures and/or different materials (tactile lines may also be added).
- The whole of the illustration is tactile, so that the child can feel the contours and recognise it as a whole. The illustrations are filled in with material and are not line drawings.
- The same textures are used for the same words (for example, a cat feels the same in all the books).
- The tactile illustration is placed on a right-hand page in the space between the word at the top of the page and the sentence at the bottom of the page.
- Parts of the tactile illustration should not overlap (they are not placed partly above each other).
- The essence of the illustration is made tactile. Details that are not relevant are not made tactile.
- The textures used (smooth, soft, hairy, ribbed, rough, dimpled etc.) are fitting for the subject.
- Contrasting colours are used, so that it is also suitable for children with some residual vision and for other children such as brothers and sisters.
- The tactile illustrations and any coloured illustrations match each other.
- There is sufficient distance between the tactile illustrations and the text.
- The books are also suitable and are available for visually impaired and blind parents and/or grandparents who want to read them aloud to a child.
- A guide for parents is included in the book (for example, inside the front cover).
- We are looking for a simple title using the first words that a child learns in braille.