

Issues in Reading

Auditory access provided by the cochlear implant has enabled many children to make substantial gains in spoken language development. The critical role that well-developed spoken language plays in the development of literacy skills cannot be overstated. Thus, it follows that children with cochlear implants may bring skills to the reading task that might assist them, first, in learning to read and, later, in reading to learn. The following article explores the relationship between auditory access and the development of reading comprehension.

Building Skills that Support Reading

It is well documented that children who have plentiful and pleasurable experiences with books at a young age have a greater chance of becoming proficient readers in later years. Reading aloud to children from the moment they have auditory access begins the process of vocabulary stockpiling that will contribute to future reading success in school. Developing the critical thinking skills required for reading with real comprehension can begin during read-alouds before any formal reading instruction is undertaken. Parents and early interventionists can assist a child in:

- Making connections between stories and life experiences to set the stage for independently building meaning from text.
- Getting the main idea through telling or retelling a story.
- Sequencing events by recalling the events of a story in proper order.
- Predicting the outcome of a new story, which allows a child to play an active role in book sharing even before decoding, is expected.
- Making inferences by “reading between the lines” and “filling in” from personal knowledge and what makes sense.
- Drawing conclusions by piecing together bits of information in a story to come up with an idea that is not expressly stated.



Phoebe S. -
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Breaking the Code

As the child with a cochlear implant matures, there are a number of ways in which he/she will be asked to recognize, in print, the words stored in the spoken language vocabulary. There are essentially two main approaches to beginning reading.

- Phonics-based approaches require that a child learns rule-governed, sound-symbol relationships. These rules are applied to text in a process called decoding. Children with severe-to-profound hearing loss who use cochlear implants are in a unique position to take advantage of phonic-based approaches because of the auditory information provided by implant technology. The ability to hear the consonant and vowel sounds of spoken language creates the first link in pairing the speech sound to a visual (letter) representation of that sound. When these symbols are combined, recognizable words can then be identified. This is the start of reading.

