

# Do Children Learn to Read Better From Their Parents?

While paging through [\*The Ordinary Parent's Guide to Teaching Reading\*](#), I came across a fascinating little story from author Jessie Wise's personal experience:

*"I was adopted by an elderly couple who had been educated in an isolated, rural one-room schoolhouse. By her eighth and final year of school, Meme had studied algebra, Latin, and the literature excerpts in the old McGuffey's readers. Uncle Luther had stopped school after sixth grade, but he had an aptitude for mathematics and taught himself carpentry and draftsmanship. They lived on a small subsistence farm in Tidewater Virginia.*

*Meme and Uncle Luther had been taught reading and spelling by sounding out letters, and they began to teach me the same way, forming words with alphabet blocks. Later they taught me to write on a small blackboard – I'm sure their own school experience had included a slate!*

*The first-grade teacher in the local public school heard that Meme and Uncle Luther were teaching me to read at home using old-fashioned methods. The teacher made a special visit to our home to tell them to stop teaching me. 'Reading is not taught this way anymore,' she warned. 'There are new methods. You will ruin her education if you persist in doing things the old-fashioned way.'*

*...*

*My education wasn't ruined by my early reading lessons; I was placed directly into second grade when I started school. I consistently remained at the top of my class throughout school. I was also the only girl in that small, rural class to graduate from college. I think the foundation that I was*

*given in reading and the encouragement to do well academically were keys to that success."*

Today, [14 percent](#) of adults can't read, and of those who can, only [13 percent](#) are able to do so proficiently. In fact, [half](#) of all adults can't read a book written at an eighth grade level. This is after years of new methods which promise to teach children to read more efficiently and effectively.

If we want to raise children who are proficient readers, who understand the world in which they live, and who will one day be the leaders of the next generation, are American parents going to have to take things into their own hands and teach their children to read outside of the education system?