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ABSTRACT

Noting that only the combination of ingredients could be said to be unique, this booklet describes the SITDOWN technique for reading improvement. The booklet begins with background information, noting that students' reading difficulties can be approached through the "back door" of spelling. The booklet presents a week-long schedule for sequencing and student self-correction of spelling using the technique of teaching "word families" (such as starting with "all," then moving on to "tall," "stall," "install," and "installment"). The booklet notes that, using this technique, students ranging in reading levels from 1.0 to 11.0 were able to improve their spelling dramatically. The booklet also discusses how to individualize the technique. (RS)

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Reading Improvement Through  
 SITDOWN:  
**S**imultaneous  
**I**ndividualized  
**T**eacher-**D**irected with  
 students correcting their **OWN**  
 mistakes

by  
 Don McCabe

AVKO "Great Idea"  
 Reprint Series #634

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AVKO Great Idea Reprint

#634

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## What is AVKO?

AVKO is a non-profit tax-exempt, membership organization.

AVKO was founded in 1974.

AVKO is subsidized by donations and grants.

AVKO is open to membership to anyone interested in helping others learn to read and write.

AVKO is run by members from as far away as Hawaii and Quebec.

AVKO's daily operations are handled by volunteers.

AVKO plans to build and operate a model reading research center in a YEAR-AROUND camp setting that would economically and efficiently service the needs of dyslexics of all ages.

AVKO hopes to spread the concept that parent and spouse tutoring in spelling/reading skills can be successfully taught in adult community education classes and that members of a problem reader's support group can greatly assist the efforts of any volunteer tutor working in the literacy movement.

AVKO provides newsletters and economical opportunities to pursue individual research projects and to take part in large scale cooperative research projects that have immediate practical applications.

AVKO is attempting to accomplish these goals primarily through the profits generated by the inservices, workshops and the sale of materials developed for the special needs of students, parents, and adults.

## Reading Improvement Through **SITDOWN**

### Student Individualized Teacher

Directed with students correcting their **OWN**

#### BACKGROUND:

Only one aspect of the SITDOWN concept could be said to be unique, and that is the combination. Each ingredient has been used either separately or in different combinations, all rather quite successfully. The combination came about as a direct result of my having to teach reading in classrooms in which the reading level of the students varied from 1.0 to 11.0.

Like many others before me, I discovered that students with severe reading problems do their best to hide the fact from everyone, including themselves, but... when it comes to admitting spelling problems, these students are no different than the rest of us. Almost all of us freely admit to being poor spellers. It seems to be part of our cultural and linguistic heritage. I have even heard school superintendents and college professors publicly (if not proudly) admit to being "lousy" spellers.

So, because there appears to be no stigma attached to being a poor speller as there is to being a poor reader, I, like many many before me, began to attack students' reading problems through the backdoor of spelling.

To help develop the self-confidence of my students who were basically illiterate and to give some form of challenge, mild as it was, to the better readers, I began each hour giving a five minute spelling test.

The difference was:

1. The students were NOT given a list to study in advance.

REASON: If one of my poor students missed one of the "easy" words he had "studied" he would learn the wrong thing: that he was dumb.

If a student misses something that was never assigned,

it's to be expected.

But if a student gets a word right that he has NOT studied, then he's smart!

2. The words to be learned (not studied) followed specific word family patterns.

REASON: To allow students to discover for themselves the patterns within words belonging to the same families, to make it easy for students to learn from previous mistakes, and to incorporate vocabulary that is not demeaning, but even challenging. For example, even in the very simple *-at* family, there is the word *scat* and *scatting* which has a special meaning to jazz enthusiasts, or *tatting* which means a special way of making lace.

Using this technique, I was able in a class with twenty-five juvenile delinquents with reading levels initially from 1.0 to 11.0 to get every single student to correctly spell (and be able to read) the word *installment*.

### The Secret:

#### SEQUENCING & STUDENT SELF-CORRECTION

For example, if my *-all* family started on a Wednesday, by the following Tuesday, they would know the word *installment*.

Wednesday: After 10 words of a family they were mastering I would give:

all	The students laugh! But they write the word. I give the spelling, and they correct.
tall	They write, I show, they correct.
stall	They write, I show, many must correct their misspellings!
install	They write, I show, most get the "big" word right. Many of the 1.0 readers are thrilled at how "smart" they are.
call	They write, I show, they correct.

recall                      They write, I show, they correct and they get an ADULT word -- meaning remember or to vote out or to take back.

Thursday:      After other words they have been having:

fall                      I give the word, they write, I show, they correct.

ball

stalls                      Many forget to add the -s, or to put the t after the initial s, but they are learning the -all sound and getting constant practice on beginning consonants and consonant blends without any formal presentation.

installs                      All get this right!

calls

recalls

Friday:

falls  
balls  
stalled                      Many miss the -ed  
installed                      All get this right!  
called  
recalled

Monday:

fallen                      Many miss the -en, but will eventually learn the -en ending.

wall  
stalling                      A very few might miss this.  
installing                      But they get this one right.  
calling  
recalling

Tuesday:

falling  
walls  
mall (vocabulary)  
small  
installment Like falling off a log.  
caller

To work on the irregular words and the spelling demons I would dictate sentences. Just like the family words, I followed most of the basic techniques of SITDOWN.

### **SITDOWN.**

**Simultaneous** -- All the students together.

**Individualized**

**Teacher-**

**Directed** with Students correcting their **OWN** mistakes immediately after making them and before going on to the next, so that learning and applying the learning can take place.

Using this technique, I was able to get all of my students to correctly spell the words your and you're automatically in their own writing almost 100% of the time. To do this, I dictated two sentences (and two sentences only) each day for about a month which had the "YORZ" in them.

To **AVOID** the **APPEARANCE** of a **DAILY DRILL** on the "yorz" mini-lessons on specific words were slipped in. For example: For three days, the emphasis might be on: quit, quite, and quiet. On one day the two sentences might be:

1. If you're quiet, we might quit quite soon.
2. Does your mother know that you're planning on quitting your job?

On another day, the two sentences might be:

1. Does your principal know what courses you're planning on taking?



2. If you're going to the your principal's office, don't tell him that he doesn't have any principles.

This technique worked well, except for those few students who could hardly spell their own name. A sentence like either of the #2's above was far too long. It was in meeting this challenge that I really put the I in SITDOWN, the

INDIVIDUALIZING in conjunction with the Simultaneous and the Teacher Directed with students correcting their OWN. I devised three levels of difficulty for the same sentence, such as the following:

You're doing quite nicely, but I wish you'd quit being so quiet.

I first typed out the correctly spelled sentences as above. Then, I used Liquid Paper® to white-out just what I wanted the slowest of the students to concentrate their energies on.

Their sentence would look like:

\_\_ou are doing qu\_\_ nicely, but I wish \_\_\_\_\_ would qu\_\_  
being so qu\_\_\_\_\_ .

The "average" for the class would have the same sentence, except that I would have more of it whited out.

\_\_\_\_\_ doing \_\_\_\_\_ nicely, but I wish \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ being so \_\_\_\_\_ .

For the "faster" students, I would have the same sentence. But they would have to write the entire sentence with no help.

By reading the exercise WITH all the students Simultaneously but with separate "versions" of the same sentence, the "slower" students were able to pick up through

what amounts to being a variation on "Neurological Impress" a great many reading skills, while ostensibly working on improving their spelling skills. You might note, that this SITDOWN technique can be used with almost any commercial materials. All you need is lots of whiteout and access to a copying machine.

**HELP WANTED:** We have not encountered any systematic studies on the effect on teaching spelling and/or reading through the use of SITDOWN.

**SITDOWN:**

**S**imultaneous

**I**ndividualized

**T**eacher-

**D**irected with students correcting their

**O W N**

We would appreciate it if some of our AVKO members (or university researchers) would give it a try and send us their results.

## An Overview of the Services Provided by the AVKO Foundation

- Inservices, Workshops, Training Sessions for:  
Classroom teachers, Parents,  
Homeschoolers, Community Adult Literacy  
Volunteers, Supervisors, Reading  
Consultants, Curriculum Consultants, Special  
Education Consultants.
- Educational and Instructional Materials. Write  
for FREE catalog.
- FREE Daily Tutoring at the AVKO  
Reading Clinic.
- Bernice Webb Memorial Library.

AVKO is a non-profit tax-exempt 501(C)3 membership organization, founded in 1974, subsidized by donations and occasional grants, open to membership to anyone interested in helping others learn to read, staffed by volunteers.

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