

Adapting and Protecting Early Childhood Books

Children in early childhood settings will need to access even more books than younger children. We believe that all books typically used in early childhood settings should be made accessible for children with disabilities. In the DESK for Home section we talked about adapting cardboard books with a variety of paper clips and page fluffers. Those items can still be used to assist in accessing early childhood books. However, if they have paper pages, you will need to protect the pages from tearing. There are several ways you can do that.

Laminating

You can laminate most of each page using sheets of plastic laminate (Clear Adhere, C-Line, available at Sam's Club or office supply stores, \$10 per box of 50). You can also cut the book apart and actually put the pages through the laminating machine, then tape the book back together again using 2" clear mailing tape. Laminated pages can be written on with dry erase pens, which is a nice added feature.

Page Protectors (floppy pages) Another way to protect the pages is to cut the book apart, slip the pages into page protectors and put them in a 3 ring binder. This works well if the child will be "pushing" or "sliding" the page from right to left rather than "lifting" each page to turn it

Page Protectors (rigid pages)

If you want to use the page protectors and 3 ring binder, but need rigid pages that will be "lifted" to turn, you will need to buy two copies of the book. You once again cut the book apart and insert two copies of each page in the same page protector. Next put one or more sheets of tag board or pieces of manila file folders in between the two identical book pages to create a more rigid page and still see both "sides" of the story book page. Once this is done these new pages can be further adapted with the page fluffers, window shade pulls, or giant paper clips described in the previous section.

Adapting Pages for Interaction

You can also adapt books so that a child can interact more specifically with the content. For instance, if a child was learning to recognize numerals or count objects, you might adhere a small piece of loop velcro, to a place on the pages of a counting book and then provide little laminated number cards with a piece of hook velcro on the back. The child could remove and replace the numeral that goes on each page (or fix them after you got them "wrong")

Implementation

Because children in Early Childhood settings have a variety of needs, it makes sense to adapt books in a variety of ways. Every child should have a way to independently enjoy books. **Don't forget to have communication displays and voice output devices with each book that have messages related to the contents so that the child can communicate to others about the story and what they liked, didn't like, or about which they had questions.**

Adapting Books for Easier Access

There are many wonderful children's books on the market today. These books are as important to the development of literacy in children with disabilities as they are for other children. It is our task to insure that they are regularly read to the child with a disability and also made available for independent enjoyment. Ways to adapt books are numerous and limited only by your imagination. Here are a few suggestions for simple adaptations that work well on cardboard pages.

Giant paper clips

There are many different types of paper clips available these days. A trip to the office supply store can provide you with many possibilities. The very large decorative plastic clips and the various sizes of bull dog clips are two of the most useful for adapting books. They can be clipped to the pages of the book at intervals starting near the bottom of the first page and placing them an inch or two higher on each page as you progress through the book.

Page Fluffers

This is an idea that we believe originally came from Patti King DeBaun. (It has gone through several changes in Wisconsin.) Page fluffers are anything that separates pages so that they are easier to turn. Materials you can use are: jumbo paper clips, tag board (or a discarded manila folder), foam of any type to give you volume (try upholstery foam or camper foam which has adhesive on one side), hot glue, and clear mailing tape. (Or use foam strip door insulation- it already has a sticky side!-SM, 1999). Cut tag board and foam into 1 1/4" squares. Place a jumbo paper clip over each piece of tag board. Then glue the foam to the side of the tag board with the **small** half of the paper clip. Next place clear tape around the whole thing **with the exception of the large half of the paper clip** which will need to remain free to be slipped over the book page. You can make these thicker by using thicker foam or more than one layer of foam. You can create these with a variety of materials, so don't feel limited to these.

Hot Glue Separators

You can separate pages quickly and inexpensively by putting a dollop of hot glue on the lower right hand corner of each page. **Caution:** be sure the glue is dry before you turn the page. You don't want the pages to become glued together.

Window shade pulls

Plastic window shade pulls are another useful way to "fluff" or separate pages. They work nicely for the child that can slip his/her fingers between the pages and lift the page to turn it. They are also useful on books that have pages that slide out to reveal further pictures. (Thanks to Sue Hasz, Kaukauna, WI for that idea.)

Note: Remember to always provide a communication board with every book if you are using it with a child who will not be able to comment or request things related to the book without it.