

Second Edition

Tactics for Teaching

Thomas C. Lovitt



TACTICS FOR TEACHING

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PREFACE

There are 105 tactics in this second edition of *Tactics for Teaching*. They are categorized into six sections: reading, writing, spelling, mathematics, classroom management, and self-management. Four of these categories were included in the first edition; the writing and spelling sections are new.

There are 50 tactics in the reading section, 10 each in writing, spelling, and mathematics, 15 in classroom management, and 10 in self-management. I kept 22 tactics in reading from the first edition, 5 in mathematics, 10 in classroom management, and 9 in self-management. There are 59 new tactics in this edition. Any tactics used from the first edition have been revised. One of these revisions is the inclusion of a section on monitoring in each tactic. This monitoring section was not a component of the tactics in the first edition. Moreover, I have included an additional reference for each of the “old” tactics. The new citation either validates the original technique’s continued popularity or it describes a new wrinkle on the original approach. I tried to select research dated later than 1986 for the updated references and for the new tactics as well.

The sources for the majority of these tactics are journal articles in education and psychology. In fact, one of the primary considerations in selecting a tactic was that it was supported to some extent by data. Whenever possible that is the case. Some tactics that are included in this edition were carried out by students or others but the results were not published. In those instances, some data were still available to suggest that the procedures were effective. There were a few times, however, in which I selected a tactic that was simply written up but that did not have supporting data. These instances are rare, and when they did occur, I made a professional judgment that these tactics would be effective if the procedures outlined were followed properly.

The format for each tactic is the same throughout, and is very much like the design of the first-edition tactics. Each begins with a brief statement about the rationale for or background of the tactic, in which I explain (when appropriate) its derivation. The next section describes the type of pupils with whom the tactic was used in the cited study, as well as the type of students with whom the tactic would be most appropriately arranged. The third section is an outline of procedures for implementing the technique. In this part I tried to include enough detail so that teachers could put the idea into practice. The next section is on monitoring. There, suggestions are given for acquiring data on the effectiveness of the procedure. The next section of each tactic is on possible modifications and considerations. In this segment I discuss how the tactic can be altered for use with a wider range of pupils or with children whose behaviors differ from those originally documented. I have also noted aspects of the tactic that teachers might want to consider as they arrange its implementation. Each tactic ends with a citation or two giving the research that stimulated it.

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TACTICS FOR TEACHING



READING

There are 50 tactics in this section on reading, which makes up the major portion of this book. The first eight tactics pertain to the assessment of various reading skills (e.g., prereading skills and aspects of comprehension) and represent different ways in which to monitor these skills, such as with proposition analysis and portfolios. The next three tactics are concerned with aspects of early reading (e.g., phonemic awareness). In the next group of eight tactics, the focus is on oral reading. Included in this group is a tactic on placement and several that apply to increasing fluency. Next are four tactics that focus on vocabulary development. Silent reading and scanning are covered in the next two tactics. The group of 15 tactics that follows focuses on ways to enhance reading comprehension. This is one of the most important sections of the entire book. As with all the other sections in this second edition, newly researched techniques are included along with some tried-and-true procedures from the original edition. The next section includes six tactics that deal with reading in the content areas. Following this section is a tactic concerned with learning about other languages. In the final group, there are three tactics especially written for parents.

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1 ASSESSMENT: PRECISE SCREENING OF EARLY READING SKILLS

Background

The steps in this technique* are to first identify the important prereading behaviors that first graders should develop, then determine the extent to which these skills should be attained, and finally, to schedule extra help for youngsters deficient in these skills.

One assumption behind this project is that there are important prereading behaviors, and when children can execute them proficiently, they are more likely to become successful readers. Another assumption of this approach is that certain prereading behaviors require auditory skills, whereas others rely on visual acuity. In other words, before a child can read, he or she must be able to discriminate between certain sounds and between certain visual symbols. Another feature of this screening technique is its reliance on a practice-sheet format.

Who Can Benefit

This is an appropriate technique for first graders, or possibly kindergartners, if it is done late in the year. The teacher could administer this screening test to an entire class at the beginning of the year, and once again at the end. More frequent data should be kept on children who are less proficient in these skills and for whom special assistance should be arranged.

Procedures

1. Design four types of practice sheets (8 1/2" × 11"):
 - a. *See letter, name letter.* Print the various letters of the alphabet randomly on a page. The child's task is to say the letter names as fast as he or she can for one minute.

*In 1970, Linda Esmay developed this project for a special education class at the University of Washington in Seattle.

- ## Monitor

In line with the procedures explained here, the teacher should keep track of each pupil's correct and incorrect rates as he or she performs each of the four skills. These rates should be charted each time the pupils perform, and their rates should be compared to those of exemplary performers in order to determine how far off the mark they were. By consulting these data, the teacher would know when to arrange special treatments for a pupil or would know when the pupil had achieved the goal and could move on to more advanced aspects of reading.

Modifications/Considerations

Other skills related to reading can be selected and assessed using similar techniques. For example, a teacher might design a sheet of consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words or one of consonant clusters, or might focus on digraphs, diphthongs, short or long vowels, familiar but irregular words, or short phrases. Other teachers might consider this method of assessment with various pinpoints in math, spelling, handwriting, or other subjects. Drake (1990) suggested that an informal reading inventory be developed based on the following five skills: oral cloze, oral cloze with initial consonant, sound/symbol relationships, knowledge of letter names, and instant recognition of high-frequency words. Her choice of critical skills was not very different from the ones described here.

The frequency with which these assessments are administered can certainly vary. For this example, the teacher gave them to all pupils at the beginning and end of the year, and more often to youngsters who were off the mark. Other teachers could assess their youngsters on a monthly, weekly, or even daily basis throughout the year.

Research

Drake, S. V. (1990). Why not an informal reading readiness inventory? *Academic Therapy*, 25(3), 315–319.



2 ASSESSMENT: MAINTAINING PORTFOLIOS

Background

According to some authorities, portfolio assessment is the answer to all of our assessment needs. Portfolio assessment has certainly been the alternative to standardized assessments of reading. The idea behind portfolio assessment comes from the files or portfolios kept by artists, architects, and photographers who assemble them to display their work. When such individuals apply for positions or simply wish to show others their work, they can pull out these visual records; they do not have to rely on indirect or synthetic measures of their abilities.

Who Will Benefit

Portfolios have been developed successfully for children and youth of all ages. Although these records have been created most often for elementary-school-age children who are learning the subjects of reading and writing, portfolios could be quite useful for older students, and in other subjects.

Procedures

If portfolios are to be used to satisfactorily monitor aspects of reading and writing, the following steps must be considered:

- The portfolios belong to the students; they should have some choice (more and more as they mature into independent readers and writers) as to what goes into them. The teacher serves as a consultant; he or she, first of all, explains to the students the importance and function of the files.
- The portfolio is a growing repository of developing performances and ideas. Periodically, the contents are reviewed. As part of that process, some materials are discarded and others revised. The teacher and student should hold conferences about what is in the file and what will be

put into it in coming days. During conferences, the student should be encouraged to identify areas that need improvement and should be made aware of other performance aspects that have been developing satisfactorily.

- The portfolio should contain a variety of materials that reflect students' performances in reading and writing. Reading logs that report ongoing reactions to books and articles make valuable contributions to the collection.
- The portfolio should be the basis of conferences with parents. During these sessions, the student and teacher should explain to parents what the portfolio is all about. Parents should be encouraged to question why certain items are in the file and to comment on the different materials and the ways in which they were developed. Moreover, parents should be asked to suggest other items that might be included in the portfolio.

Following are five aspects of reading in general that lend themselves to portfolio assessment:

1. *Strategic reading, comprehension, and metacognition.* Students could be asked to perform five types of reading exercises: *identifying* the topic before reading, *predicting* the content based on information in previous passages, *inferring* from the text, *monitoring* the meaning of a new word, and *summarizing* important information. Data on the extent to which students responded to these strategies could be kept.
2. *Additional measures of comprehension.* *Cloze tasks* are well-suited to comprehension assessment, especially since they can be developed from regular curricular materials. Although *retellings* take more time and are not as suitable with groups of children, they should be included in instruction and assessment. For a further discussion of the cloze procedure and of retelling techniques, see Tactics 28 and 33, respectively, in this section.
3. *Additional measures of metacognition.* Children should be asked to inform others as to *how* they decided whether or not they liked a book they had read or listened to. As students read and respond to queries, the teacher should record their comments and determine whether and how they used such strategies as skimming or bringing in prior knowledge.
4. *Motivation.* Students could be asked several questions that have to do with their reading abilities and habits:
 - Are you a good reader?
 - Do you enjoy reading?
 - How often do you read at home?
 - Do your parents read, and if so, what?