


## Directions for The Phone/Text Activity

All the child needs is writing and drawing materials and *someone on their end to help them* -- perhaps a parent, older sibling, or caregiver. I've written directions below for both of you. **Their directions appear in green**, and yours are in black. Following is a sketch of what you do. Click here for a more detailed version of these directions.

1. **On the Phone:** Have the child tell you about something they love, fear, want, or are just very interested in. Encourage them to talk about it for awhile, so they form a strong "mind picture" about it.
2. **Help them decide on their Key Word:** A Key Word is 1, 2, or occasionally 3 words that are a "caption for their mind picture." It might be their dog (**Bella**), something they love to eat (**ice cream**), or something about a holiday (**Christmas tree lights**). At first, you'll need to be careful it's really something they're very interested in. But soon, they'll probably know what word they want before you call them.
3. **Text the Key Word to them:** At first, all you text is the word, **ice cream**. But as the child advances and is beginning to recognize more than their Key Word, you'll write something like, **Your word is Bella**. And probably much later, **Your word is Christmas tree lights. I can't wait to see them!** The person on the child's end can tell you when they child easily "reads" your text. Then add something to it. (It's not really reading yet -- more like recognizing.)
4. **Show the child the text when it comes in and copy the word by hand onto heavy card stock.** (If you have card stock, make the word card 8.5" X 3." But if not, a recipe card will do. Also, use a wide-tipped marking pen -- always with the same colored ink, so the child doesn't use color to recognize the word later.)
  - o Say the names and/or the sounds of each letter as you copy the word. (Most letter names make the common sound for that letter. For one that does not, say the sound. If something distracts the child, stop writing until they're watching again.)
  - o Hold the word card out far enough, so the child can focus on the entire word. Have them say the word a couple of times.
  - o Place it on the table and have them trace over each letter with the index finger of their writing hand, while you say each letter or sound again.
  - o Help the child make a hole in the card and place it on their metal "Word Ring". (A shower curtain ring will do.)
5. **Make a duplicate of the word card**, to use for the child's follow-up activity:
  - o A child who is able to draw gets a copy of the word on regular paper -- to glue under their picture.
  - o A child not able yet to draw gets a copy on heavy card stock, so they can carry it around and do something with it. For example, if they've asked for their dog's name, they might show the card to the dog, then place it in the dog's bed, or put it next to its bowl. (See other examples in section #5 on [this page](#).)

6. **Then text the one who made the call. Send a picture and description of what they've done. Have the child watch and tell you what they want to say as you write. Read it over with them a few times and let them hit Send.**
7. **Text back a brief message:** If possible, you're still there to respond immediately, but if not, later will do. For a child not yet reading at all, you write a very brief response. Something like, *Great job.* Or, *Very good.* Then later, switch to something else that adds a new word for them, such as, *Great Work.* Or, *Very good job.* Once the child easily recognizes the first few words, you might expand by writing something like, *You did a great job.* Or *You did very good work.* (Avoid saying, "Good boy/girl." Instead, comment on the *work.*) Later you might make your text a little longer, *You did a great job today.* *I'll call you tomorrow.* And so on....

So that's all you do -- except there's one final point to make. To safeguard this strategy, the child must only have words on their Word Ring *they immediately recognize -- for these give them confidence with print.*

### **Take a word off the ring a child does not immediately recognize**

Reminder: This section is for both the caller and the person on the child's end: **From now on, before you write the new word, the child "reads" all the words on their Word Ring. (It's more like recognizing/remembering than reading, but definitely a step in the right direction.)**

**If they come to a word they don't immediately recognize, it must come off the ring. Please resist the any impulse to give hints or help them sound it out. Just say something like, *Well that wasn't a good enough word. We only want good words on your ring.*** (That may happen a time or two when a child is new to Key Words, and it usually means they're not talking long enough about the word, or they aren't choosing words with strong enough meaning for them.)