

## Using [ASD Reading](#) with Other ASD Programs: Creating a Solid Base of Language and Learning

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### A Key Question: Which programs are right for my child?

In providing services for their children, front and center in the minds of parents is the decision as to which programs are the ones they should be selecting. Often the answer results in choosing everything possible in the belief that “more” is better.

While the pull to “do it all” is strong, this path is generally not the way to go. Many difficulties can result from using too many programs. These include overloading a child with too many demands; offering programs that are too complex; offering programs that are too easy; and presenting programs that conflict with one another. The end result is not only an enormous drain on finances and time, but an intense effort that fails to benefit the child.

The material here is aimed at addressing this issue by providing information that can help in selecting the programs that best serve your child’s progress.

### Prerequisites for Any Language or Cognitive Program

For any teaching program to be beneficial, two key behaviors must be in place. The child must be willing and able to:

- (i) sit for a few minutes (initially five minutes is sufficient), and
- (ii) follow the input that the adult, or the computer, is presenting.

If a child does not yet possess these behaviors and is under 4 years of age, one option is to wait for 2-3 months and see if they emerge. However, if a child is older than this, or if you wish to foster these behaviors as soon as possible, you need to put in place the changes that will lead to these behaviors. The book [Spectacular Bond](#) offers a program that can enable you to achieve this goal. Written by Dr. Marion Blank, her colleague Dr. Suzanne Goh and a parent Susan Deland, the book outlines a comprehensive home program that helps you deal with issues such as tantrums, meltdowns, overactive behavior, eating problems, etc. that interfere with the calm and attention needed for learning.

## The Programs that Link to ASD Reading

There are a number of programs that, depending on your child’s needs and abilities, can be used prior to, along with, or after the completion of [ASD Reading](#). The information presented below is designed to enable you to make the best selection.

### [ASD Unlocking Language](#)

[ASD Unlocking Language](#) is a spoken language program that complements the written language being mastered via [ASD Reading](#). It is a comprehensive program that teaches children to express complex sentences, answer increasingly sophisticated questions and summarize events.

Time Required	4-5 sessions a week, with each session taking somewhere between 15 and 30 minutes
Prerequisite Skills	the child should be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 3 years of age or older</li><li>• able to express 2-3 word utterances (either via imitation or spontaneous production)</li><li>• producing speech with recognizable, complete words (the program can be used with children who have some articulation problems; however, it cannot be used if a child is restricted to word approximations such as “ba” for “ball”)</li></ul>

It is possible to use Unlocking Language while the child is working on [ASD Reading](#). It can also be used prior to, or after [ASD Reading](#).

### [ASD Pre-Speaking](#)

Many children on the spectrum are said to be “non-verbal”—meaning that they do not speak. The language taught via [ASD Reading](#) affords an excellent path to enable the children to master our verbal system--despite their lack of speech. By contrast, efforts to have them speak, when they cannot do so, can lead to frustration and lack of progress. It is generally far more productive to develop a broad range of non-speaking, cognitive skills such as memory, sequencing and patterning. These are the skills taught in [ASD Pre-Speaking](#).

Time Required	4-5 sessions a week, with each session taking somewhere between 10 and 20 minutes
Prerequisite Skills	the child should be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2 years of age or older</li><li>• able to execute simple actions such as pointing, picking up small objects (with hand support, if necessary)</li><li>• able to follow simple one step commands (such as “give me that”).</li></ul>

It is possible to implement the Pre-Speaking Program while the child is working on [ASD Reading](#). It can also be used prior to, or after [ASD Reading](#).

If, after completion of the Pre-Speaking Program, the child (i) still cannot speak, but (ii) has advanced to Level 3 in [ASD Reading](#), it might be possible to use [Unlocking Language](#) –in written form. In other words, in place of speaking, the child will use his/her reading and writing abilities to meet the demands of [Unlocking Language](#). This route is particularly useful for non-verbal children who are 8 years and older.

### [ASD Speaking Sounds](#)

When children do not speak, typically an enormous effort is put into getting them to talk. Unfortunately, the efforts often falter because the intervention goes too far, too fast. That is, the children are thrust directly into language when they do not have the foundation for producing real words. That foundation includes a complex integration of fine motor skills involving the mouth, lips and tongue. Without these, speech is not possible and efforts to elicit spoken language will be dogged by failure. However, with careful training, the integration can be developed in many children. [Speaking Sounds](#) is designed to achieve this goal.

Time Required	4-5 sessions a week, with each session taking somewhere between 5 and 15 minutes
Prerequisite Skills	the child should be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2 years of age or older</li><li>• able—either via spontaneously or when asked--to produce six different speech sounds (sounds such as <i>ba, ka, puh, ut</i>, etc.) These sounds, or phonemes, consist of a consonant sound (such as <i>b, m, s</i>, etc.) preceding or following a vowel sound (such as <i>ah, ee, oh</i>).</li><li>• willing—when requested to do so-- to produce two of these sounds, over a sequence four or five trials (e.g., say <i>mee, mee, say ba go, say ut ma</i>, etc).</li></ul>

After completion of [Speaking Sounds](#), the children can move on to [Unlocking Language](#) where they can apply their speech production abilities to actual language.

It is possible to implement [Speaking Sounds](#), while the child is working on [ASD Reading](#) as well as the Pre-speaking Program. It can also be used prior to, or after [ASD Reading](#).

### [ASD Typing](#)

While typing, or keyboarding, tends to receive relatively little attention, it can be an invaluable tool in fostering the development of language. For example, in reading education, it is central to activities such as spelling and sentence writing. In language education for non-verbal children, it provides the vehicle that allows them to express themselves. Fortunately, it is not difficult to teach keyboarding. [ASD Reading](#) offers some training at the outset of the program.

However, many children benefit from more extensive training so that they can use the keyboard or touchscreen with greater speed and ease. [ASD Typing](#) provides this training.

Time Required	4-5 sessions a week, with each session taking somewhere between 5 and 15 minutes
Prerequisite Skills	the child should be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 years of age or older (it can also be used with non-verbal 3 year olds to provide them with a vehicle for producing language)</li> <li>• able to point—with hand support, if needed</li> </ul>

The typing program can be used with [ASD Reading](#), but it is best to use it before [ASD Reading](#) is initiated. Further, if a child has started [ASD Reading](#) and is having difficulty with the keyboarding or touch screen, the Reading program can be stopped temporarily and [ASD Typing](#) can be put in place. Then, within a few weeks, [ASD Reading](#) can be re-started.

### [Steps to Stories](#)

[ASD Reading](#) and [ASD Unlocking Language](#) teach a broad array of language skills. Once those two programs are completed, the children are ready to move on to more advanced skills. One key skill is story comprehension. It plays a major role in helping children (i) understand the events of daily life and (ii) deal with the story telling and recall that plays a major role in mainstream education. [Step to Stories](#) has been designed to help the children master this important realm of language. It offers 20 stories, organized into two groups—simple and more complex.

Time Required	2-3 sessions a week, with each session taking somewhere between 10 and 20 minutes
Prerequisite Skills	the child, if verbal, should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be 4 years of age or older</li> <li>• have completed <a href="#">ASD Reading</a> through Level 3</li> <li>• have completed <a href="#">ASD Unlocking Language</a></li> <li>• be able to speak in sentences</li> </ul> the child, if non-verbal, should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be 4 years of age or older</li> <li>• have completed <a href="#">ASD Reading</a> through Level 3</li> <li>• be willing and able to type sequenced sets of 3-5 sentences</li> </ul>

[Steps to Stories](#) is used most commonly with children who can speak in sentences. The program can be used with [ASD Reading](#). However, it does not require a child to read and so it can also be used independently of [ASD Reading](#). If it is used with non-verbal children, then reading is required because the child’s production of language must be in written form (i.e., the child writes the ideas, rather than speaking them.)

## Story Smarts

Once a child has completed [Steps to Stories](#), he or she can advance on to [Story Smarts](#). It offers 30 stories that enable children to understand and summarize longer and more complex stories than those offered in [Steps to Stories](#). Mastery in this realm offers benefits to aspects of language related to retelling, in general, such as recounting events in responding to questions such as “What did you do in school today?”

Time Required	2-3 sessions a week, with each session taking somewhere between 15 and 20 minutes
Prerequisite Skills	<p>the child should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• be 5 years of age or older</li><li>• be able to speak in sentences</li><li>• have completed <a href="#">ASD Unlocking Language</a></li><li>• have completed Steps to Stories</li></ul> <p>with non-verbal children who are highly motivated, it may be possible to carry out the program if the child</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• has completed <a href="#">ASD Reading</a></li><li>• has completed <a href="#">ASD Unlocking Language</a> (via written language)</li><li>• has completed Steps to Stories (via written language)</li><li>• is willing and able to type sequenced sets of 3-5 sentences</li></ul>

As with [Steps to Stories](#), [Story Smarts](#) can be used with [ASD Reading](#). Although it does not require the children to read, it is highly desirable that they do. It is also best if they have completed [ASD Reading](#). If used with non-verbal children, then reading is required because the child’s production of language must be in written form (i.e., the child writes the ideas, rather than speaking them.)

## ASD Calculator Basics

High-tech devices have incredible potential for enhancing children’s learning. Although relegated to the background, simpler devices also have a role to play. One such device is the calculator which can enrich a child’s life both in school and in the community. For example, in school, the calculator can aid in solving the math word problems. In the community, mastery of the calculator enables a child to be proficient in daily life skills such as shopping. [ASD Calculator Basics](#) is a five level program designed to help all children—those who are verbal and those who are non-verbal--achieve mastery of this tool. Upon completion of this program, the child is ready to move on to applying these new skills to math problems.

Time Required	2-3 sessions a week, with each session taking somewhere between 10 and 15 minutes
Prerequisite Skills	the child should be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 years of age or older</li> <li>• able to point—with hand support, if needed</li> </ul>

It is possible to implement this program while the child is working on [ASD Reading](#) as well as the Pre-speaking Program. It can also be used prior to, or after [ASD Reading](#).

### [ASD Basic Math](#)

The three R's of reading, writing and arithmetic have long been the foundation of education. Fortunately, just as children on the spectrum are drawn to reading, they are also drawn to math. This includes children who are non-verbal as well as those who are verbal. ASD Basic Math has been created to foster the ability and interest that the children display in this area. It teaches a wide array of skills including numbers (1-10), geometric shapes, and key math concepts such as “same as,” “all”, “another one” and “the right number.”

Time Required	3-4 sessions a week, with each session taking somewhere between 15 and 20 minutes
Prerequisite Skills	the child should be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 years of age or older</li> <li>• able to point—with hand support, if needed</li> <li>• able to pick up objects such as small cards</li> </ul>

It is possible to implement this program prior to, along with and subsequent to [ASD Reading](#). It is fine to do Calculator Basics prior to, or along with ASD Basic Math—but it is not required. Further, the two programs can be done independently of one another.

### [ASD Piano Play](#)

Music has amazing appeal for the children and they are motivated to respond to programs in this area. Music not only provides a source of great pleasure, it also provides a route for building skills to foster a range of cognitive abilities, including attention, memory and sequencing. [ASD Piano Play](#) is a six level program that teaches children to produce musical sequences by playing notes on a keyboard. It start with playing one note and progresses to having them play sequence of four notes from memory.

Time Required	2-3 sessions a week, with each session taking somewhere between 10 and 20 minutes
Prerequisite Skills	the child should be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 years of age or older</li> <li>• able to press keys on a simple piano keyboard —with hand support, if needed</li> </ul>

This program may be used alone or in combination with any of the other ASD programs.

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### **Time: A Key Factor in Selecting the Programs**

Based on your child's needs, interests and abilities, you may decide to choose only one of the programs listed above. However, it is more likely that you will find several of them to be useful. When that is the case, it is important to not overload your child. Time is a key parameter in helping you limit your selections so that they best serve your child. The following guidelines are ones you can use:

#### **For children under 4 years:**

the maximum amount of time should not exceed one hour a day. To meet this restriction, it is helpful to place the possible programs on a priority list and then select the top two or three. Put the others aside and plan to carry them out as you complete the programs you have initiated.

The one hour limit may be somewhat surprising since there has been so much emphasis on hours and hours of daily instruction for young children on the spectrum. However, when the instruction is well-designed, short periods of learning can be amazingly effective. Further, long periods of instruction are draining for a young child, leading to fatigue, resistance and tuning out.

The hour time period of instruction should be divided into a few segments—with no segment exceeding 20 minutes, particularly at the outset. It is best if the segments are separated and offered at different points in the day. However if they are clustered, there should be at least a 15 minute break between one activity and the next. The breaks can be used in a number of ways: for snacks, physical activity, rest, etc.

#### **For children from 4 to 6 years:**

The maximum time of instruction should not exceed 90 minutes. Within the 90 minutes, the guidelines offered above should be followed—but any segment can expand to 30 minutes.

#### **For children older than 6 years:**

It's best to keep the instruction limited to two hours a day. The restrictions are important because most of the programs will be implemented outside the school day. That day is long and it can be taxing if the post-school day is filled with hours of additional instruction.

As you may have noted, the programs are not designed to be done seven days a week. So you may find it best to use the weekends for two of the 2-5 sessions recommended for any program. Many families find that children are more alert and can respond more effectively on a Saturday or Sunday morning when they are more rested.

As you start working with the programs, you will find a schedule that best suits your child and the needs of your family. Also keep in mind that you need not be the sole person implementing the programs. If you have an aide, therapist, friend, or family member who can help, that is excellent. It eases your workload, while teaching your child to generalize the skills being acquired.

Best of luck as you move ahead in the exciting realm of empowering your children to learn!