

Intensive training helps children with reading and writing difficulties

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Intensive daily training for a limited period is better for children with reading and writing difficulties than the traditional remedial tuition offered by schools, reveals new research from the University of Gothenburg.

Around 5% of school children in Sweden have problems learning to read and write on account of difficulties with word decoding.

Phonemic building blocks

"Most researchers agree that the underlying problem is a limited phonological ability, in other words limited awareness of the sounds that make up spoken words," says Ulrika Wolff, senior lecturer in education at the University of Gothenburg's Department of Education and Special Education, and the researcher behind the study, the first of its kind in Sweden.

12 weeks' training

The study saw more than 50 nine-year-olds with reading and writing problems being given 40 minutes' [training](#) every day for a total of 12 weeks by specially trained educationalists from the University of Gothenburg. They were then compared with an equivalent group that had been given the traditional remedial tuition offered by schools.

The training comprised intensive and structured exercises in understanding the alphabetical code. The children practised linking phonemes and graphemes (sounds and letters), phonetic awareness, guided reading aloud and reading in general, which served to strengthen reading fluency and reading speed. However, the strict, research-based programme also incorporated space for creativity, play and [curiosity](#).

Effective action

The results show that the children who took part in the training programme coped significantly better than the children given traditional remedial tuition, and that they did so in all of the areas tested -- word decoding, spelling, reading speed and [reading comprehension](#).

"Structured and individual teaching meant that these children made significant progress," says Wolff. "Reading and writing difficulties often lead to low self-esteem and poor self-confidence, which can make learning to read even more difficult for [children](#). It's important to take effective action as early as possible to break this vicious circle."

Provided by University of Gothenburg

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