

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 378 536

CS 011 955

AUTHOR McCabe, Don
 TITLE Underlining (or Highlighting): Cuing the Computer Brain. AVKO "Great Idea" Reprint Series No. 628.
 INSTITUTION AVKO Educational Research Foundation, Clio, MI.
 PUB DATE 82
 NOTE 1lp.; For other documents in this series, see CS 011 943-960.
 AVAILABLE FROM AVKO Educational Research Foundation, 3084 W. Willard Rd., Clio, MI 48420-7801 (\$1; quantity discounts available).
 PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Teaching Guides (For Teacher) (052)
 EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS Elementary Education; Readability; Reading Material Selection; *Reading Strategies; *Study Skills; Vocabulary Development; Word Recognition
 IDENTIFIERS *Highlighting (Text); *Underlining

ABSTRACT

Letting students as they read underline or highlight words they do not know allows teachers to find out the words their students do not know. This procedure also leaves a record of all the once unknown words for students to re-read later. It is an added advantage for teachers that it allows them to see how far into a book students have read, and whether the book is either too easy or too hard. The real reason for having students underline or highlight words is to help them discover that they can learn words by themselves if they alert their "computer" brains that there is something that needs to be learned. Underlining or highlighting cues the computer brain that the word is a problem for the brain to solve. Underlining or highlighting is an active process that can help make reading an active rather than a passive process. (RS)

 * Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
 * from the original document. *

ED 378 536

Underlining (or Highlighting): Cuing the Computer Brain

by
Don McCabe

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED L.

- This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it
- Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality

Don McCabe

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

CS011855

AVKO "Great Idea" Reprint Series #628



UNDERLINING (OR HIGHLIGHTING):
CUING THE COMPUTER BRAIN

By
Don McCabe

The AVKO "Great Idea" Reprint Series

#628

Copyright © 1982 AVKO Educational
Research Foundation, Inc.
3084 W. Willard Road
Clio, Mich. 48420-9444

What is AVKO?

AVKO is a non-profit tax-exempt membership organization founded in 1974 that is:

- subsidized by donations and grants.
- open to membership to anyone interested in helping others learn to read and write.
- run by members from as far away as Hawaii and Quebec and whose daily operations are handled by volunteers.
- planning to build and operate a model reading research center in a YEAR-AROUND camp setting that would economically and efficiently service the needs of dyslexics of all ages.
- trying to spread the concept that parent and spouse tutoring in spelling/reading skills can be successfully taught in adult community education classes and that members of a problem reader's support group can greatly assist the efforts of any volunteer tutor working in the literacy movement.
- providing newsletters and economical opportunities to pursue individual research projects and to take part in large scale cooperative research projects that have immediate practical applications.
- attempting to accomplish these goals primarily through the profits generated by the inservices, workshops and the sale of materials developed for the special needs of students, parents, and adults – but AVKO still needs donations to survive.

UNDERLINING (OR HIGHLIGHTING): CUING THE COMPUTER BRAIN

There are many good reasons to get your students in the habit of Underlining (or highlighting) words which they don't know while they are reading. The most obvious is that it allows you, the teacher (or parent, as the case may be) to find out which words they don't know.

It also leaves a record which can be rewarding to both you and your students when you later on have them re-read from a book with loads of underlined (or highlighted) words which they -- by then -- can read.

As a teacher, I learned to prefer having my students mark up their books with pencil marks than to copy something and call it a book report. By giving students the choice of a 500 word report or Underlining (or highlighting) words they don't know, I usually was able to get students to do it "my" way.

And "my" way did have its built-in teacher advantages. I could easily tell:

1. How far into a book they were. If words are only underlined (or highlighted) in the first 25 pages, that's as far as they are.
2. Whether or not the book is too easy or too difficult.
 - A. More than five underlined (or highlighted) words per page, may indicate it's too difficult. Certainly, three underlined (or highlighted) words per line

(as has happened) indicates the book might as well be written in Sanskrit.

- B. No underlined (or highlighted) words or only one every five or six pages usually indicates the book is too easy. In fact, no underlined (or highlighted) words usually meant that the student hadn't read the book. Of course, there will always be those who think they are smarter than the teacher who will swear up and down that they read all 1200 pages of Tolstoi's *War and Peace*, but they didn't underline or highlight any words because they knew all of them. A quick check of:

1. What's this word?
2. What's this word?
3. What does this word mean?

generally reveals the story. They were bluffing.

I tell my students that they must remember the agreement. They are to read the book and underline in pencil (or highlight) all the words they can't pronounce AND all words whose meaning they are not sure of even though they may be able to pronounce them. If they are not willing to do the Underlining (or highlighting) then they must do the writing of the 500 word book report.

But the real reason for having my students underline or highlight words is to help them discover that they can learn words by themselves--if, they alert their computer brains, that there is something that needs to be learned.

That's where Underlining (or highlighting) comes in. The very act of Underlining (or highlighting) is a cue
a cue

to the computer brain that there is a problem to solve. Without the cuing by Underlining (or highlighting), the pattern of letters skipped over will no more be retained by the computer brain than the *zvcxtwmtqs* of a foreign language or the position of the telephone poles and fire hydrants you pass by every day on the way to work.

When I give my students the instructions about Underlining (or highlighting) (or the "choice" of Underlining (or highlighting) or writing a 500 word report), I also give them the reason. I don't want to leave the impression that I'm asking them to underline or highlight because I have stock in a pencil or a highlighter company.

I tell them that when they are reading they are bound to come across words they can't pronounce or whose meaning is beyond them. They can't just stop reading because the word is *lough*.

They must go on. Unfortunately, the student doesn't just go on, the student SKIPS the word. Skipping is something we do when it isn't important. Skipping words gives the computer brain the incorrect message. But Underlining (or highlighting) doesn't.

Underlining (or highlighting) CUES the computer brain that this is a problem for it to solve.

If a cue is repeated frequently enough, one of two things is liable to happen. The most common is that the computer

brain will solve the problem and all of a sudden you just know what the word is and what the word means. This is how we learned all our basic vocabulary as infants and small children. The computer brain solved problems for us.

The other thing that happens after a specific word is underlined (or highlighted) time after time after time, is that even though the computer hasn't solved the problem it is now triggering you into action to help it learn by making you mad enough to ASK, "Hey Ma, Hey, teacher, Hey anybody, what does *lough* mean? Does it rhyme with tough, bough, dough, or through?"

I know that constant encountering of the same word can be infuriating, because that's what happened to me when I was reading *Trinity* by Leon Uris. After about the seventh time, I encountered that (censored) -ough word that I couldn't pronounce or even puzzle out the meaning from context (there never was any), I was so furious, I actually used the dictionary. Because I was so angry, I learned that *lough* is the Irish spelling of lake and is pronounced the same as in Scotland where they spell it *loch* but say something that sounds to me like "lock."

Good readers, like you and I, mentally underline words which we don't know as we read. And because we read a great deal, our vocabularies are large. What the readers who aren't as good as you and I can do to develop the MINDSET for learning is to get into the habit of using a pencil to underline or highlight words that they don't know.

THERE ARE TWO MAIN REASONS FOR UNDERLINING (OR HIGHLIGHTING):

1. To alert the computer brain that the word is a word that you need to learn.
2. To alert the computer brain that the particular passage is meaningful to you and you want to remember it.

Underlining (or highlighting) is an active process and it helps to make reading an active rather than passive process.

We urge you to adopt this method, and we urge the researchers at the universities to test out this theory that Underlining (or highlighting) can be a cue to the computer brain.

Other Titles in the AVKO Great Idea Reprint Series

- CS601- 220 Names/Faces - 220 Sight Words Are Too Many for Students with Memories Like Mine. .75
- CS604- A Common Sense Approach to Controlled Word Lists .75
- CS605 AVKO Pre & Post Diagnostic Spelling Test On 100 of the Most Common Phonograms in English *Teachers' Edition* .75
- CS606 AVF.J Pre & Post Diagnostic Spelling Test On 100 of the Most Common Phonograms in English *Student's Test Booklet* .75
- CS607 A Sentence Dictation Test That Covers Over 300 of the Most Commonly Used Words .75
- CS609 An LD Screening Device That Can Be Given to Entire Schools in Less than 10 Minutes .75
- CS610 Sample Word Family Puzzles that Special Education Students Can Create .75
- CS611 How to Set Up a Course for Adults whose Children or Spouses Have Reading/Spelling Problems 1st one FREE. .75 ea thereafter.
- CS619 The Case of the Invisible Y or Why is there a Y in *You* But Not in *Umion* ("Yoon yun"), *Lumec*, and *Huge?* .75
- CS620 How to Develop Your Own Sequential Spelling Tests .75
- CS622 An Index of Phonic Patterns by Vowel Types .75
- CS624 The Three Different Words Spelled H-A-V-E. .75
- CS626 The SQ3R Reading Formula Really Works .75
- CS627 A Listing of Phonic Patterns for Older Students .75
- CS629 Proper Editing of Notes: the Key to Successful Learning in Middle School through College .75
- CS630 Building a Better Vocabulary the Lazy Man's Way .75
- CS631 A Practical Use for Miscue Analysis: Building Egos .25
- CS632 Learn About the Learning-to-Read Process by Teaching Yourself to Read Upside Down .75
- CS633 Comprehension/Schema Theory: A Practical Application .75
- CS634 Reading Improvement Through SITDOWN: Simultaneous Individualized Teacher-Directed with Students Correcting their OWN. .75
- CS635 Taking the Sting Out of Testing When Giving Word Recognition Tests to Special Education Students .75

FREE from AVKO:

Information concerning special AVKO inservices and workshops on such topics as:

- Discipline -- Helping Students Gain Self-Control without M&M's.
Spelling -- Accentuate the Positive, Eliminate the Negative, Don't Mess with Mr. Inbetween.
Reading -- After Phonics, Then What?

Write:

AVKO Educational Research Foundation
3084 W. Willard Road, Suite 628
Clio, Michigan 48420-7801

Phone: (810) 686-9283 FAX: (810) 686-1101

An Overview of the Services Provided by the AVKO Foundation

- Inservices, Workshops, Training Sessions for:
Classroom teachers, Parents, Homeschoolers,
Community Adult Literacy Volunteers,
Supervisors, Reading Consultants, Curriculum
Consultants, Special Education Consultants
- Educational and Instructional Materials. Write for
a FREE catalog.
- FREE DAILY Tutoring at the AVKO Reading
Clinic.
- Bernice Webb Memorial Library.

AVKO is a non-profit tax-exempt 501 (c)3 membership organization, founded in 1974, subsidized by donations and occasional grants, open to membership to anyone interested in helping others learn to read, and staffed by volunteers.

AVKO Educational Research Foundation
3084 W. Willard Road, Suite 628
Clio, MI 48420-7801
Telephone: (810) 686-9283 FAX (810) 686-1101