

# Helping Pre-readers Memorize

Sparkies discovering Bible truths can be fun and rewarding for both leaders and children. Still, teaching a nonreading child to memorize can be a demanding task.

Young children learn through hearing, understanding and applying. (And the process has to be in that order for the true learning to take place.) Some ideas for enhancing the learning experience of your non-readers are the following:

## Reading

Read each section thoroughly. Be familiar with the verses and instructions. Then read to the child the material he or she is trying to learn.

## Hearing

Help the child recognize new words by their beginning sounds. Say the words slowly and distinctly. Say each syllable separately. Ask the child to repeat the word after you. Make up a sentence that includes the word and helps the child understand its meaning. Use the explanation provided in the handbook for certain words.

## Seeing

Children perceive words differently than adults do. Young children need pictures to help them grasp facts. Use visual aids to represent words. The Sparks® handbooks will help. Plus, many Christian bookstores are well-stocked with material helpful for this purpose. Or you can make your own.

## Building

If a verse contains more than one phrase, “build” the verse phrase-by-phrase. Mark the divisions of the verse by making slash marks in the Sparkie’s handbook. Read the first phrase aloud and ask the child to repeat it to you several times. When that phrase has been learned, repeat the process with the second phrase. After both phrases have been learned, help the child recite them together. Add additional phrases in the same manner.

## Doing

Involve children’s senses by adding hand claps, rhythm and motion. Make memorization fun! Awana® offers aids such as music tapes (for each handbook), puzzles and activity books. The more senses you involve in the learning process, the more your Sparkies will learn and retain. Keep in mind that boys and girls have different learning styles. Girls tend to have stronger verbal skills. They learn best through talking, learning rhymes and singing. Boys usually do better with a hands-on approach. They like puzzles, games and activities that relate to what they’re learning.

## Pacing

Pace your Sparkies. Pacing creates a favorable environment for understanding and accomplishment. Pacing is for the benefit of the child. Used properly, pacing increases both motivation and achievement.

So what is a good pace for Sparks? For Sparkies enrolled from the start of the club year, a good pace is three to five sections per club meeting. This applies only to Sparkies completing the required elements of a handbook.

Sparkies needing to complete more than one required handbook in a single club year (for example, a first-grader trying to complete both the first and second handbooks) should proceed at a pace that allows them to catch up by the end of the club year. When the pace requires it, Sparkies may complete sections before or after club or at a time approved by your club leadership. The key to successful pacing, however, is up to the director’s discretion. NOTE: Club directors should use their discretion to increase children’s pace as needed, allowing them to complete the appropriate handbook by the end of the club year. Remember, completion of the handbooks (not the extra-credit reviews) are the only required elements necessary to earn the Sparky plaque.

## Praising

Always take time to praise and encourage children for their effort and achievement. If children don’t understand the meaning of verses they memorize, those verses will have little impact on their lives. Talk about the meaning of verses as you help children memorize them. As you build a verse one phrase at a time, discuss the meaning of each phrase. And always be aware of opportunities to share the gospel.

## Memorization Techniques

To help Sparkies memorize during Handbook Time, try these techniques:

- Repeat verses over and over again.
- Break material into increments or “building blocks” of a few words or phrases. Say words or phrases and ask Sparkies to repeat after you. Through repetition, Sparkies will memorize material.
- Write each memorization item on a different colored half sheet of paper. As Sparkies learn verses, tape the half sheets of paper to the wall in a rainbow shape.
- Print memorization material on stiff cardboard. Cut the cardboard into puzzle pieces. Instruct Sparkies to assemble the puzzle as they learn the material. Store the puzzle pieces in a plastic bag for review at another time.
- Hide verses in a word-search puzzle. (Go on the Web to find word-search sites to help you build custom word-search puzzles for your Sparkies.)
- Write words to a verse on pieces of construction paper. Throw the pieces randomly on a table (words up). As Sparkies recite memorization material, tell them to point to each piece of paper.
- Write words to the verses on 3” x 5” (7.6 x 12.7 cm) cards. Shuffle cards and ask Sparkies to arrange them in order. When finished, Sparkies can trade cards with each other or challenge other Sparkies to a race.
- Write memorization material on poster boards and hand them around the club room.