



**The Reading Game  
Rules and Guide**

By Kenneth Hodkinson

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[www.thereadinggame.com](http://www.thereadinggame.com)

## A Letter From the Author:

The Reading Game is a learn-to-read program consisting of six illustrated storybooks: skunk, snake, bear, penguins, unicorn, and zebra. Each book comes with a simple word-matching card game. Each game is played in six stages, each of which teaches five words.

Frequent exposure through play hard-wires these words into long-term memory. By transforming rote learning into a fast paced game where there is a winner every few seconds, learning to read becomes fun. After completing stage six of the first game, the student has a reading vocabulary of thirty words. The first story is told using just those thirty words.

The card game requires two players, the student and the tutor. Students should be allowed to proceed at their own pace; once they recognize all five words in a set, they naturally want to move on to fresh pastures; word acquisition develops its own momentum. After completing two stages, the student will have learned ten words. We now introduce a new reading medium, the captioned picture. The short descriptive phrase incorporates the ten words just learned and relates to the picture. This step helps the child transition from the stand-alone words in the card game to reading short sentences and introduces capitalization and punctuation. This rewards the child at different stages of the card game and helps prepare the student to read the full storybook successfully once all six stages have been completed.

When used in classrooms, parent volunteers or older “reading buddies” can work with the student or in small groups to play the matching card game. There are free summative and formative assessment worksheets and class recording sheets for classroom use as well as ideas on themed topics for classroom discussion on the storybooks. These can be found on the Educator’s Page at [www.thereadinggame.com](http://www.thereadinggame.com) under “Downloadable Worksheets” and

big 2	hen 6	play 1	treat 2
book 6	her 3	rabbit 6	tree 2
but 2	hide 2	rain 5	try 6
by 4	his 3	right 4	unicorn 5
can 1	honey 3	run 1	up 2
care 3	hop 6	sad 1	vulture 6
castle 5	house 2	sea 4	wall 5
cat 1	ice 4	see 2	want 1
chase 6	if 4	seek 4	way 2
clock 4	in 2	seven 4	what 1
come 4	is 1	shake 2	we 4
could 6	it 1	she 1	where 3
dark 3	kind 1	shock 3	why 5
day 1	know 3	should 6	will 1
did 5	land 4	show 5	window 5
do 1	last 5	shower 5	with 1
dog 1	leave 5	side 2	wombat 6
dolphin 6	little 2	sight 4	work 4
each 5	like 3	sit 5	would 6
eat 3	locks 3	skunk 1	wrong 6
even 6	long 3	sky 5	yak 6
fair 6	look 4	slide 4	you 2
feel 2	loose 6	snake 2	zebra 6

## The Reading Game Word List

about 5	find 2	make 2	snow 4
after 3	fish 4	me 1	so 4
again 5	flock 4	meal 2	some 3
ago 5	flower 5	mistake 2	soon 6
agree 2	fly 5	more 4	stay 1
all 1	food 4	mouse 2	steal 3
alphabet 6	for 2	my 6	stop 1
and 1	forget 2	nap 3	stripe 1
are 3	from 2	no 2	such 5
at 5	front 6	not 1	sun 5
awake 3	fun 1	now 4	sweet 3
back 4	gate 5	of 1	take 5
bark 3	get 2	off 4	that 3
be 3	girl 3	once 6	the 2
beak 4	glide 2	one 4	then 5
bear 3	go 2	only 5	there 3
because 5	goes 6	out 1	they 1
bed 3	gold 3	over 6	thing 3
behind 5	goose 6	page 6	think 6
belong 6	hair 3	penguins 4	this 1
below 4	have 4	people 5	to 1
beside 5	he 3	plane 4	toad 6

in the “Common Core Report on The Reading Game” in the Reading Standards for Literature and Informational Text Sections for K and 1st grade.

In writing the stories, I developed them on the assumption that the student would understand the transition from lowercase letters to uppercase (a=A) and that these are inter-changeable. This allows for correct capitalization and punctuation in the stories.

By the time students come to the end of the zebra story, 180 words, many of them Dolch and High Frequency words, are hard-wired into memory. Phonics can then be incorporated into the game by using the cards to develop new words and sounds (see notes on Phonics). The brain is now perfectly capable of going it alone; new words as they are encountered will go into long-term memory because that part of the brain is now primed for such a task. Millions of neurons are geared up to go to work. All you have to do is feed the student books. The Reading Game is intensely rewarding; you are giving the gift of literacy. Enjoy!

Ken Hodkinson

### Rules for the Card Game:

Play is between the student and the tutor. The tutor must be able to read all the words on the cards before play begins. Play takes the form of the familiar memory game of matching cards. The tutor begins by taking the ten playing cards for the “skunk” series, skunk game 1, and places them randomly face down. They contain the words can, cat, is, me, and not. Each word occurs twice.

The two players take it in turn to flip over any two cards. If they match, the player who flipped them takes the cards and says the word several times in a clear voice. In the beginning the student is prompted by the tutor. If the two cards don’t match, they are returned to play.

When all ten playing cards have been taken, the cards are shuffled and placed face down again. Play continues with the same ten cards until the student can read each of the five words without hesitation. The cards are then replaced with those for skunk game 2 of the “skunk” series, which comprise five new words, and play proceeds as before.

When the tutor feels that the student can easily read the ten words from games 1 and 2, the student is tested by the captioned picture flashcard that relates to the cards just played. Following this, the tutor introduces game card sets 3, 4, 5, and 6 in sequence. The student continues to be tested by being asked to read the appropriate sets of sentences on the captioned picture flashcard after completing games 3 and 4, and again after completing games 5 and 6.

Should the student have any difficulty reading the picture flashcards, a refresher game with the appropriate set of game cards will correct the problem. Once the student has successfully read the three flashcards incorporating the thirty words for that game, she or he is ready to read the story of the skunk without a stripe.

After reading the skunk story, the student repeats the sequence with the other sets of cards in the series: snake, bear, penguins, unicorn and zebra, each of which introduces an additional thirty words. Each subsequent story incorporates words from earlier books in the series.

Phonics is easily incorporated into “The Reading Game” program. After the student has completed game 6 of a series, lay out the cards as shown on page 4 and point out the similarity. Ask the student to suggest similar words.

**EXAMPLE:**

	<b>(-ay)</b>	<b>lay</b>	<b>hay</b>	<b>may</b>	<b>ray</b>	<b>say</b>	<b>way</b>
<b>Book 1</b>	(-ay)	day	play	stay			
	(-un)	run	fun				
	(-o)	to	do				
<b>Book 2</b>	(-ide)	glide	side	hide			
	(-ake)	snake	shake	mistake			
	(-ee)	tree	see	agree			
	(-ay)	way	day	play	stay		
	(-ouse)	mouse	house				
	(-o)	go	no				
<b>Book 3</b>	(-ark)	bark	dark				
	(-e)	be	he	me	she		
	(-ake)	awake	make				
<b>Book 4</b>	(-ock)	clock	flock				
	(e)	we	be	he	me	she	
	(-o)	so	go	no			
	(-ow)	snow	know				
	(-ight)	sight	right				
<b>Book 5</b>	(-y)	fly	sky	why	by		
	(-un)	sun	run	fun			
	(-all)	tall	wall	all			
	(-ower)	flower	shower				
	(-ake)	take	snake	shake	mistake		
	(-ow)	show	snow	know			
<b>Book 6</b>	(-en)	hen	when				
	(-oose)	loose	goose				
	(-y)	try	fly	sky	why	by	
	(-ould)	should	would	could			