



How to Maximize Your Child's Learning Ability: A Complete Guide to Choosing and Using the Best Computer Games,

By Lauren Bradway, Barbara Albers Hill

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Over twenty years ago, Dr. Lauren Bradway discovered that all children use one of three distinct ways to grasp and remember information. Some learn best through sound and language; others, through visual stimulation; and others, through touch. In this unique book, Dr. Bradway first shows you how to determine your child's inherent style. She then aids you in carefully selecting the toys, activities, and educational strategies that will help reinforce the talents your child was born with, and encourage those skills that come less easily.

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How to Maximize Your Child's Learning Ability: A Complete Guide to Choosing and Using the Best Computer Games, By Lauren Bradway, Barbara Albers Hill Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #3080030 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Square One Publishers
- Published on: 2003-10-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x .75" w x 6.00" l, 1.02 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 288 pages

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

According to Bradway, a communication disorders specialist, children are born with an innate tendency to absorb information primarily through either visual, auditory, or tactile means. As they grow, they tend to cultivate the skills corresponding to their preferred style of learning, at the expense of others that do not come as easily. The authors' intent is to help parents determine a child's learning style and use this knowledge both to strengthen natural abilities and to develop skills that might be lagging. Each chapter focuses on one stage of development, from infancy through eighth grade, and presents case studies of distinctive learners. A topic relevant to the age group is then discussed, and specific suggestions for toys, games, and activities that enhance each learning style are offered. This clearly written and practical book offers a proven approach to improving children's social and academic skills. Recommended for parenting collections.

- *Linda Cullum, Lake Superior State Univ. Lib., Sault Ste. Marie, Mich.*

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About the Author

Lauren Bradway, PhD, a speechlanguage pathologist with a doctorate in Human Ecology from the University of Oklahoma, has a successful private practice.

Barbara Albers Hill, who received a BA in Psychology and an MS in Education from Hofstra University, is a resource teacher in grades one through six.

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I met Joey Billings near the end of his kindergarten year. This bright six-and-a-half-year-old had started the school year as an inquisitive, outgoing chatterbox, but an ensuing eight-month struggle with printing, drawing, and letter recognition had left his self-esteem badly battered. Joey had taken to calling himself "dumb-head" and "crazy," and lately had begun to invent reasons to stay home from school.

Because of his classroom difficulties, his kindergarten teacher recommended diagnostic testing and possible special class placement for first grade. Joey's mother feared that testing would confirm her son's feelings of inadequacy. She brought Joey to my office to learn what she could do to help him regain his self-confidence and end his kindergarten year on a positive note.

To determine Joey's learning style, I asked Mrs. Billings to tell me about his early development and to fill out my Learning Style QuickCheck for six-year-olds. I then did some testing, observed Joey at play, and reviewed a portfolio of his kindergarten work.

It immediately became clear that Joey was a Listener by learning style, with a well-developed vocabulary and excellent verbal skills. His lagging skills in the Looker area?specifically, in visual recall,

printing, and eye-hand coordination?were what was causing him so much distress.

Throughout my sessions with Joey and his mother, I called upon my background in educational diagnosis, my familiarity with the strengths and weaknesses of Listeners, and my years of experience with children who have similar problems. Mrs. Billings, an expert source of information about her son, had already shared her personal observations with me. She was now about to take on the role of teacher, developing Joey's Looker skills for school success.

Three issues were resolved from the start. First, Joey's "home therapy" program must be fun. To build visual skills, simple mazes and snap-together blocks replaced the puzzles that Joey found so frustrating, and projects and outings were planned with his interests in mind. For example, an ant farm and trips to a planetarium and video arcade were used as enjoyable ways to focus visual attention. Game-like strategies were employed to incorporate Joey's strong verbal skills with beginning reading and writing. Joey was having difficulty recalling the shape of the letter T, for instance, so it was printed in green and given a name: "T is a tree." Unable to set his letters on a line when printing, Joey found that he could do so when the bottom line was colored green and he could pretend to set each letter on the "grass." Some letters, like "g," reached underground. Others, like "b," had parts that touched the sky.

Second, and equally important, was my recommendation that Joey's mother present all activities and techniques as play, rather than a prescription for academic success. That way, Joey would not feel pressured to "succeed."

Finally, it was vital that tactics and strategies be implemented in a minimum of time and as part of the family's daily routine. Joey's mother, like so many other parents with jobs and children, simply couldn't squeeze extended periods of one-to-one time into her day.

Just four months later, and in plenty of time for first grade, Joey's readiness skills tested on grade level. He could now remember the names of letters and print them from memory. Throughout his first grade year, Mrs. Billings continued to tailor her son's home experiences to his Listener learning style, and to her delight, his June report card praised both his strong reading skills and his positive attitude toward school!

I've met many Joeys over the years. Some have been Listeners just like him, needing to develop Looker skills for school success. Others have been Lookers, with excellent eye-hand coordination, but difficulty following directions and hearing the distinction between sounds?abilities critical when learning to read. Still others have been Movers, with great coordination, but problems with both auditory and visual recall. No matter what the lagging skills that led their parents to consult me in the first place, an understanding of their child's learning style enabled these parents to help their children in the same way Mrs. Billings helped Joey.

Therapeutic activities approached at home through inborn learning styles allow a child to have fun while bolstering a weak skill. Multisensory teaching, which is based on the same practice of appealing to two or more senses simultaneously, has long been an accepted practice in the field of education. Science kits, math manipulatives, and books on tape are just a few examples of multisensory materials for classroom use.

Because we know that certain academic subjects rely heavily on specific learning-style strengths, it is possible to predict those children who will have difficulty with particular subjects. This means that by knowing what to look for, we can actually prevent certain types of learning problems by tailoring a baby's or toddler's toys, outings, and even physical care to his innate learning style. By minimizing a child's academic frustration while encouraging his well-roundedness, sociability, and confidence, Mom and Dad stand to gain a better understanding of their youngster's needs and, ultimately, a happier parent-child relationship.

Joey was a client, so I had the opportunity to guide his home therapy program in person during my office sessions with him and his mother. *How to Maximize Your Child's Learning Ability*? which includes the same background information, the same Learning Style QuickChecks, and the same explanations of toys and techniques that I use in a clinical setting? is a personal guide to creating a home therapy program for your child. Within these pages, I share with you the techniques and methods I use daily in my practice with children. You'll learn how to identify your child's learning style, and how to develop activities and interactions that encourage your youngster's less-favored skills while reinforcing those areas in which he naturally shines. With commitment and time, be it several weeks or several months, you'll begin to see the emergence of a more self-assured, balanced learner who has a greater chance for classroom success.

Read the case histories and use the QuickChecks, and you'll gain a deeper understanding of the way your child learns. Try the activities and techniques recommended for your child's age and learning style, and you'll discover that you can incorporate a multitude of learning experiences within your family's daily routine. Perhaps most important, you'll find that you can enjoy each other and have fun along the way!

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