

# Juta prepares the very young for a formal education

Title: *Listening & Language 2: Home Programme*

Author: Liesel van Niekerk

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Reviewed by Fiona de Villiers

Speech and hearing teacher Liesel van Niekerk and illustrator Samantha van Riet must have had such fun putting together Juta's *Listening & Language* series.

They're also clearly knowledgeable about how to engage children with pictures and words in order to develop language skills. Van Niekerk and Van Riet have also succeeded in producing a learning resource that parents and children can master together, in a relaxed home atmosphere. They believe that: "Language is the most important communication tool. Without language and the ability to listen effectively, a child is cut off from the world around her and will not function optimally at school and in society."

Parents can extend their children's vocabularies and move on to creative writing skills. When parents work together with their children, instead of doing the homework for them, constructive frameworks are put in place and homework can become a time for sharing and achievement instead of another onerous task.

Parents have praised the programme. "With this programme one has an idea of what one's child really knows. It also encourages positive interaction between parent and child. As a parent, I felt good about helping my child."

Mr Cross agrees: "Thank you for a superb programme. Ryan and I enjoy doing the work. It is fun and educational, and I have noticed a definite improvement in Ryan's language usage."

Van Niekerk has provided a useful list of guidelines at the start of this resource. She encourages parents to talk to their children, to engage positive eye contact and to really listen what their child is saying. Parents can also extend language skills by getting their children to participate in household chores. "Involve your child in daily tasks and tell her what you are doing, how and why you are doing it... ask questions and wait for the answer. Encourage descriptions and explanations... incorporate all her senses when you introduce your child to a new concept, for example, let her listen, touch, taste and smell the new object," Van Niekerk says.

The programme outlined in this book will take 28 weeks to complete, a week per module. Ten minutes should be tackled each day.

The topics parents will cover with their children are diverse: starting with school and moving towards the zoo, the library, the airport and the supermarket. In the school module, the child can draw and colour their school, participate in a spoken comprehension about school, explore the notion of position (where are the desks in the classroom?), tackle some easy mathematics concepts, learn new words like 'computer' and encounter degrees of comparison. Your child will also practise auditory reception, sentence memory, conversation and logical reasoning. The module concludes with an introduction to rhyme and the chance for each child to make up their own rhyme about school.

This book should really be in the hands of every single family in South Africa, particularly those in the far-flung, rural areas where both adults and children need quality supplementary learning materials. Let's all try and make that happen. ❀

