



## Bob Books FAQ

### What does *Bob Books* offer over the rest of the phonics offering, e.g. *Jolly Phonics*, or *Scholastic phonics*?

The difference and value of Bob Books is three-fold:

- **Story.** Humans are hard-wired for story. We love stories, we are interested in stories, and we learn from stories. Bob Books are intentionally written so that every book is a story with character development, and a beginning, middle and end. This is very satisfying to the young reader! They are doing the work to read new words, blends, and letter sounds, but they don't notice because they are being rewarded by meeting new friends and sharing in their adventures. This is extremely motivating to the new reader.
- **Happiness.** We learn more when we are happy. We learn less when we are bored, sad or frustrated. The Bob Books stories intentionally include humor, relationships and a happy ending. Again, because humans naturally learn this way, progress occurs without the student feeling they have struggled or been forced to do something they don't like.
- **Strict adherence to phonics teaching principles.** Learning to read is surprisingly complex! Any setback demotivates kids and makes them fear they are failures. Therefore, progressing at a rate that assures frequent success is critical to learning to read. Only half the words in the English language are strictly phonetic. We have been rigorous in using phonics-based words for the first two-thirds of the series so that children (1) have a strong grounding in the strategy of sounding out words, and (2) have a strong sense of their ability to employ a proven reading strategy. Sight words are introduced in context, but children will not be exposed to unusual spelling, even in common three letter words such as "are," "she," "two," until they have a confident mindset.

### The illustrations are mainly black and white, simplistic and less realistic, vis-a-vis all other products in the market. What are the insights of this approach vs the common colourful, illustrated phonics books in the market?

There are a couple of reasons for the simple illustrations

- When children are learning to read, they should focus on the words rather than the pictures. These simple illustrations are less distracting.
- Phonics methodology focusses on sounding out the words, not guessing from picture clues.
- Multi-ethnic families can imagine the characters whatever colour they want.
- Instead of being tied to a transitory style that will go out of fashion, these illustrations are timeless.
- Many parents let their children colour the book as a reward for reading it.
- People love and remember these simply-illustrated characters.
- Kids can draw them and make their own books.

### What is the phonics program that you have adopted: synthetic, analytic, embedded, analogy, or other? Why is this method adopted?

Bob Books are best described as synthetic — the emphasis is placed on teaching children to blend phonemes, which is the most difficult and important skill for beginning readers.

*"We have used Bob Books in our early reading studies over the past 20 years. The children in our research have been kindergarten and first grade students who are struggling with early word reading skills. Bob Books have been an important part of the explicit phonics instruction the children received. The books allow students to practice their emerging word reading and spelling skills, and enable children who need more practice reading decodable texts to develop word reading accuracy. The books afford practice opportunities that build children's confidence in themselves as readers. Often for the first time a student is able to read an entire book independently! The stories have universal appeal, and the humor and illustrations engage children and the adults who read with them. Bob Books are a valuable resource for children who are challenged to gain the basic word reading skills that are the foundation for strong readers."*

Patricia Vadasy, Ph.D.  
Senior Research Scientist, Oregon Research Institute  
University of Washington, Seattle, WA  
*Curriculum and Instruction, Early Reading Instruction*  
M.P.H., 1983  
University of Washington, Seattle, WA  
*Maternal and Child Health*

Patricia Vadasy, Ph.D., is a Senior Research Scientist at Oregon Research Institute. She has an extensive background in the acquisition of early alphabet and word reading skills, vocabulary instruction, and school-based intervention research. Patricia has been the principal investigator on eight United States Department of Education (DOE) funded projects, and co-investigator on three projects. She was the principal investigator on a series of research studies on supplemental early reading interventions. Patricia has published widely on her reading intervention research in peer-reviewed journals. She is the first author of the *Sound Partners* reading interventions (Vadasy et al., 2005; Vadasy, 2013), and co-author of *Handbook of reading interventions* (O'Connor & Vadasy, 2010).

