

## Fast ForWord® Language

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### Statement of the Problem

Around 5% of children have significant problems learning to read or learning how to speak their native language.

### Proposed Solution/ Intervention

Fast ForWord® Language is designed to help children's reading and spoken language by training their memory, attention, processing, and sequencing. Children train for 3 to 5 days per week, for 8 to 12 weeks.

### The theoretical rationale – how does it work?

Fast ForWord® claims to develop four cognitive skills that improve learning, language, and reading: (1) memory (the ability to store information and ideas); (2) attention (the ability to focus on information and tasks, and ignore distractions); (3) processing rate (the rate at which a student is able to accurately perceive and manipulate information); and (4) sequencing (placing the detail of information in its accustomed order).

### What does the research say? What is the evidence for its efficacy?

Strong, Torgerson, Torgerson, and Hulme (2010) have conducted the most recent systematic review of peer-reviewed randomised control trials and matched group comparison studies (equivalent baselines) of Fast ForWord®. Effects were assessed for single word reading, passage reading comprehension, expressive language, and receptive language. The effect sizes for each of the four skills were

not statistically significant from 0. The studies reviewed were methodologically sound, and had moderate to large sample sizes. Thus, they had the power to detect even a small reliable effect, if it was present.

### Conclusions

The systematic review found no sign of a reliable effect of Fast ForWord® on reading or on expressive or receptive spoken language.

### Alternative Options

Research suggests that children with reading impairments benefit from intensive instruction in phonics (for words that follow the letter-sound rules, like bat) and in reading words by sight (for words that violate the letter-sound rules, like yacht). Children with spoken language impairments should make modest but reliable improvements with intensive, one-to-one training by speech and language therapists.

### The MUSEC verdict

Not recommended

NOTE: This Briefing is an update of MUSEC Briefing 16 (December, 2008).

Key references may be found at:  
[http://www.musec.mq.edu.au/community/outreach/musec\\_briefings/](http://www.musec.mq.edu.au/community/outreach/musec_briefings/)

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