Understanding Braille

In the third grade, children are perfecting their reading and writing skills. Sometimes it can be a frustrating experience. Give your child a glimpse of how other students approach reading, by teaching him how the blind use braille.

The braille alphabet is composed of six possible bumps, two horizontal and three vertical. Different combinations of one or many of the six bumps are created to form letters (and numbers). People who understand braille can read words by feeling which bumps out of the possible six are there to make a certain letter - those braille letters then spell out a complete word. Although this sounds tricky, you'll surprise your child with just how easy this truly is.

What You Need:

- index cards
- soft surface (such as a computer mouse pad)
- sharp pencil

What You Do:

1. Have your child put an index card down on a soft surface. Have him press down on the card with the tip of the pencil, being careful not puncture completely through the paper.
2. Turn the card over. Can your child feel the bump? Put it aside. That stands for the letter “a.”
3. Now, take another card, and have your child make two bumps, one on top and the other right below the first one. That stands for the letter “b.”
4. Have your child turn the card over and feel again. Can he feel two bumps, not one? If he can't feel two separate bumps, try again and make the bumps just a little farther apart.
5. Explain to him how braille works and continue on with the alphabet.

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Next time time you're on an elevator with your child, see if there's braille by the buttons. Soon your child will not only be more aware of how other people live and learn, he'll also be able to read a few words in braille.

Recommended Books:

First Science Experiments

Shar Levine, Lesli...

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