



Earl Nightingale Lead the Field Programme

10 One Thing
You Can't
Hide

One Thing You Can't Hide

I'm sure you'll agree we acquire the skills of living successfully through knowledge. Knowledge, properly applied, is power—and knowledge is available to all of us.

The degree of a person's ignorance will determine their place in the world. Everyone is BORN ignorant and must, FOR A TIME, LIVE IN IGNORANCE. But remember this—anyone who REMAINS ignorant ... has only themselves to blame. An illiterate person in our society is in the lowest level of our social heap. From that starting point, think of society as a pyramid, with a broad base, gradually rising to a high point. Now, we know that the great majority of people are to be found in the bottom, large layers of this pyramid. The higher you go, the smaller the layers.

At the very PEAK OF THE PYRAMID, you'll find the world's MOST BRILLIANT PEOPLE. We may not have the native equipment to reach the topmost pinnacle—although we certainly might—but we do control where we will live between the very top and the very bottom. We can, most assuredly, get into the top three percent—let's say the top three layers of the pyramid. And from here we can live well and successfully all the days of our lives. It isn't that we want to be over anyone—it's just having the ambition and good sense to want to live as best we can. The higher you climb on a pyramid, the farther you can see—the fresher the air—the better the view—and the less crowded it becomes. Another rewarding thing about climbing is that as we climb, we help most of those associated with us to climb, too.

One of the most important ladders leading to the top is KNOWLEDGE. The more we know, the higher we can move.

But, where does a person begin? No one person can know everything ... in fact, our store of knowledge

is growing far too fast for anyone to even keep up with it. It's like walking into the Library of Congress, with its millions of volumes, and trying to decide which SINGLE BOOK to read FIRST—knowing that even if you lived a thousand years, you couldn't read them all.

Fortunately, the answer to this perplexing problem is known.

A person should begin with the study of their LANGUAGE—and then to their general area of interest. Two steps ... in that order ... that can move us high on the pyramid.

First, the language; in our case, English. Not enough people realize that it is our ability to use our language which will determine our place on the social pyramid ... and which will also control, to a great extent, the amount of money we will earn during our lives.

A person may dress in the latest fashion and present a very attractive appearance. So far, so good. But the minute that person opens their mouth and begins to speak, they proclaim to the world their level on our pyramid. Shaw's play, "Pygmalion"—later adapted into the musical comedy, "My Fair Lady"—is an extreme example of what I'm talking about.

OUR USE OF THE LANGUAGE IS THE ONE THING WE CAN'T HIDE.

Many years ago, the graduating class of a large university was given an examination in English vocabulary. The test scores were graded into groups of five percent each, the top five percent and so on to the bottom.

At regular intervals during the next twenty years, questionnaires were sent to the surviving graduates, asking them their occupations, incomes, and so on.

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Without exception, those who scored highest on the vocabulary test were in the top income group—while those who scored lowest were in the lowest income group.

A few years ago, Reader's Digest published an article by Blake Clark entitled, "Words Can Work Wonders for You." In it he wrote: "Tests of more than 350,000 persons from all walks of life show that, more often than any other measurable characteristic, knowledge of the exact MEANINGS of a large number of WORDS accompanies outstanding SUCCESS."

He also mentioned the work done in this field by scientist Johnson O'Connor, and gave O'Connor's best illustration of the importance of vocabulary. Tests were given to executive and supervisory personnel in 39 large manufacturing plants. The results showed that every one of the people tested rated high in the basic aptitudes that go with leadership. Differences in their vocabulary ratings, however, were definite and dramatic. Presidents and vice presidents averaged 236 out of a possible 272 points. Managers averaged 168; superintendents, 140; foremen, 114; floor bosses, 86. In virtually every case, VOCABULARY CORRELATED with EXECUTIVE LEVEL and INCOME.

Children with the best vocabularies get the best grades in school. A salesman in his fifties, who was in the bottom five percent in vocabulary, worked himself into the top 45%, and is now vice president of his firm.

"An encouraging fact to keep in mind," Clark went on to say, "is that when we master one word, we find that we have added several others. It's as if the new one is a nucleus of thought around which whirl numerous related ideas that we now come to understand. Deliberately learning ten new words, we pick up probably NINETY MORE, almost without realizing it."

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You see, understanding our LANGUAGE is the KEY to STUDYING and LEARNING EVERYTHING ELSE.

Literally millions of people are being held back in life simply because they've never taken the time to learn their own language.

Let's face it—from the earliest times, the FAVORED CLASS of people has always been the EDUCATED CLASS. They can make themselves recognized instantly, anywhere, by the simple expedient of speaking a few words. Our language, more than anything else, determines the extent of our knowledge. You see, everything in all the vast storehouse of knowledge has a name, a label. These names, these words make up the language. The more words we know and can properly use, the more knowledge we have. Of this you can be sure—a person's knowledge and their language go together. It's almost impossible for one to be larger than the other.

Before we move to the second point—which is knowledge in your field of general interest—make it a point to acquire books that will help you improve your vocabulary. You'll find them valuable additions to your library and an enormous help in your career.

In addition to vocabulary, effective ENGLISH USAGE is important. This entails learning the parts of speech, what they mean, and how they should be used to construct sentences. This, too, is a reflection of your present knowledge. Right now, mentally rate yourself on the use of the language. Would you say your rating would be “excellent,” “good,” “fair”—or “poor?”

If you rated yourself “excellent,” you're in the top one-tenth of one percent of the population. If you said “good,” you're already definitely in the top five percent. If you rated yourself “fair,” get a good book on English at your bookstore and study it. And if you rated

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yourself as “poor”—take a home study or night course in English. Many excellent courses are available.

Impress on your youngsters the importance of KNOWING THEIR LANGUAGE. More people speak English now than any other language, with the possible exception of Chinese.

English literature, from Chaucer to Eliot, from Shakespeare to Hemingway, is the richest and most extensive on earth. So when you’re studying English, you’re studying one of the world’s greatest and most interesting subjects.

If you think you don’t have time to study, listen to what Louis Shores has to say about this: “Each of us must find their own fifteen minute period each day for reading. It’s better if its regular. The only requirement is the will to read. With it you can find fifteen minutes, no matter how busy the day. That means you will read half a book a week, two books a month, twenty a year ... and one thousand in a reading lifetime. It’s an easy way to become well read.”

Yes, it is an easy way to become WELL READ ... WELL EDUCATED ... AND IT TAKES JUST FIFTEEN MINUTES A DAY.

Now, let’s get to our second area of study—our general interest. Everyone has something in which he or she is interested. This is true of the salesman, doctor, architect, executive, student, or housewife. Reading in this area is for profit. And we should read for pleasure, as well.

Once we have a regular program going along to improve our knowledge of our language, we should begin a systematic study of the field which interests us most and which will help us reach our goal just that much sooner.

Each of us should know something of WORLD HISTORY, the history of our own country ... and the

story of mankind itself. In the world of today and tomorrow, a good PERSONAL LIBRARY is vital. Those without it are going to find themselves seriously and unnecessarily handicapped. Books are not an expense item—really they're an investment—and one of the best on earth. They pay us dividends out of all proportion to their small cost—not just in pleasure and knowledge—but IN CASH. As T.V. Smith has written, "Books extend our narrow present back into the limitless past. They show us the mistakes of the men before us and share with us recipes for human success. There's nothing to be done, which books will not help us to do better."

To try to live without constantly expanding our knowledge is to close our eyes, not just to the whole purpose of life, but to the facts of life as well. Never before has the world moved so rapidly as it's moving today. We must make up our mind to move with it—to stay up with it—to grow and prosper with it. Not just because it's the best way to our goals, but because it's the way to really ENJOY LIVING—as the skillful sailor enjoys the sea.

So often a person will live in the shallows from force of habit—or because those around him or her are wasting their time there—without realizing that only a thin screen of reeds separates them from the fine, deep ocean beyond. That person can sail to any port of their choosing ... if they have taken the time, and expended the effort, to build a good boat.

Now, let me make an important point. The person who knows where they're going, and who's made up their mind to get there ... is going to make the grade, regardless of their education ... if an education is necessary to the accomplishment of their goal, they'll get it. Nothing in the world can take the place of PERSISTENCE and DETERMINATION. I think it's important to succeed in every department of our lives—and becoming well educated is one of the most vital. What good is a large material success if a person has remained too ignorant to enjoy it? Or to administer

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it?

Now, let's recap: KNOWLEDGE IS POWER ... the more our knowledge, the more power we can exercise over our lives and our futures.

Think of human society as a pyramid, composed of layers—beginning with the broad base, and narrowing to a pinnacle at the top. Pick the place on the pyramid you're going to shoot for ... and START CLIMBING.

Since there's far too much knowledge for any one person to assimilate—where can we start? First, with our LANGUAGE ... and next, with our GENERAL AREA OF INTEREST— two subjects which can keep us growing and interested for the rest of our lives.

Remember that our language is the one thing we cannot hide—except by silence. Let's bring it up to the point where it can do the job for us we want it to.

To a surprising extent, our ability to use our language—and the extent of our vocabulary—will determine our income, and our future.

Let's spend at least FIFTEEN MINUTES EVERY DAY reading something not only interesting, but calculated to stretch our mind a little more. Remember that a mind stretched by a new idea can never again return to its original dimensions.

It's estimated that the average person adds only five new words a year to their vocabulary. That's not nearly enough for this day and age. We should add that many a week. Many popular magazines publish features which will help you in this area.

And, finally, realize that graduating from school is just the beginning—the commencement—of our days and years of learning. For with wisdom will come kindness, patience, love, understanding ... and SUCCESS AS A PERSON. It's never too late to begin.