

1 Read! is a kit packed with flash cards, pop-up books and lots
2 of DVDs for kids to watch. And it doesn't come cheap, costing
3 up to \$200.

4 GINGER TORRES: The reason why I wanted to buy it
5 was to give her a head start before school.

6 JEFF ROSEN: Ginger Torres was hooked by the ads
7 and bought it for her three-year-old Chloe, but she says it
8 didn't teach her daughter anything.

9 GINGER TORRES: What you're getting is not really
10 what they say.

11 JEFF ROSEN: They say it's based on science,
12 that all babies can read, warning that if you miss that window
13 your child will fall behind. But is that really true? We went
14 to experts at Harvard. Are those babies reading?

15 NONIE LESAUX: No.

16 JEFF ROSEN: And Tufts.

17 MANYANN WOLF: It's an extraordinary manipulation
18 of facts.

19 JEFF ROSEN: And NYU.

20 KAREN HOPKINS: I think it's misleading, I think
21 it's false, and I think it raises false expectations.

22 JEFF ROSEN: In fact, we spoke with 10 child
23 development experts from the country's top universities and
24 organizations, and the message was universal: This isn't
25 reading, it's just memorization.

26 NONIE LESAUX: They've memorized what's on those

1 cue cards and they're going to respond the way they've been
2 taught.

3 JEFF ROSEN: It's not reading?

4 NONIE LESAUX: It's not reading.

5 JEFF ROSEN: Is there any evidence that learning
6 even to memorize at a young age makes you a better reader
7 later?

8 KAREN HOPKINS: No evidence at all that learning to
9 memorize images of words can make you a better reader.

10 JEFF ROSEN: In fact, experts say, most children
11 don't even have the brain development to read until four or
12 five years old.

13 MANYANN WOLF: I know not of one single study in
14 which anyone says that children who learn to read before five
15 do better later on. I am a reading expert. I know of not one
16 single study.

17 JEFF ROSEN: There are extremely rare cases of
18 babies learning to read.

19 ANN CURRY: Can you read this word to me?

20 ELIZABETH: Happy.

21 ANN CURRY: Happy.

22 JEFF ROSEN: In 2008, we tested one of them here
23 on Today with words she'd never seen before.

24 ANN CURRY: And what about this word,
25 Elizabeth?

26 ELIZABETH: Kangaroo.

1 backed by a scientific research. And while he acknowledges it
2 all starts as memorization, he says it leads to reading.

3 ROBERT TITZER: We have a book full of studies that
4 support the use of our program. It's literally thicker than
5 this.

6 JEFF ROSEN: Can you provide us that research?

7 ROBERT TITZER: Yes. Yes, I can.

8 JEFF ROSEN: But instead of published research
9 on *Your Baby Can Read!*, he sent us this customer satisfaction
10 survey conducted by his own company, along with general studies
11 about child learning that experts we spoke to say he's twisting
12 and taking out of context. As for his resume, Robert Titzer
13 has worked in some infant learning labs, but his PhD is in
14 Human Performance, the study of physical motor skills. How do
15 you respond to that?

16 ROBERT TITZER: Well, I'm not an -- a traditional
17 expert as far as reading, a reading specialist person. I'm
18 looking at this from a different perspective, which is...

19 JEFF ROSEN: Right. But the name of your
20 program is *Your Baby Can Read!*

21 ROBERT TITZER: The baby does learn to read.

22 JEFF ROSEN: But much of the research he cites
23 for his program seems to be based on his own daughter using it.

24 ROBERT TITZER: My children could read better at
25 age four than I could at age, you know, at my age, so...

26 JEFF ROSEN: Your saying your four-year-old was

1 a better reader than you as an adult?

2 ROBERT TITZER: Of course, much better. That's
3 correct. And not only that, I was teaching in college at the
4 time, and she could read better than my college students.

5 JEFF ROSEN: But experts say those extreme
6 claims just target parents who'd do anything to make their kids
7 smarter. Experts say you're preying on that vulnerability,
8 you're preying on that insecurity just to make money.

9 ROBERT TITZER: This has nothing to -- this has
10 nothing to do with that. This is about helping babies learn
11 literacy skill.

12 JEFF ROSEN: Robert Titzer wouldn't tell us how
13 much money he's made, but they've sold over a million kits. And
14 parents like Ginger Torres say he's cashing in on false
15 promises.

16 GINGER TORRES: I was very angry because I felt so
17 misled.

18 JEFF ROSEN: By the way, Ginger called the
19 company and did get her money back. Experts say this product
20 can actually be harmful because it forces your baby to watch
21 all of those DVDs, too much TV time. Matt, they say the best
22 way to teach your kids is free. You just talk to them, you
23 interact with them, you sing to them, you play with them. And
24 they'll learn just as well as they can or better than this
25 program.

26 MATT LAUER: And at their own pace.

1 JEFF ROSEN: Yeah.

2 MATT LAUER: Jeff Rosen, thanks very much
3 because of what I just said.

4 [END OF AUDIO]

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