



**The Story Of**  
**LEO J. WAHL®**  
**and his cool hair-cut.**

Get started on an exciting exploration with this read-aloud story. Then join our community of life-long learners to get more done. Visit [AlligatorZone.org](https://AlligatorZone.org).

AlligatorZone® Analysis is a read-aloud story and activity e-book for life-long learners. October 2019  
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# A letter from the publisher

Dear Reader,

This playful book-series is a publication of AlligatorZone<sup>®</sup>, where students meet startups, an impact initiative as well as a community of life-long learners who explore the world through the eyes of an entrepreneur.

AlligatorZone<sup>®</sup> is proud to present this series of stories and related playful learning activities designed to surface the delightful conversationalist that lurks within each of us, and to shine a light on our charismatic side, while we explore the world of future careers, and perhaps find our true calling, sooner than later.

This activity book can be enjoyed by late-elementary school students as well as middle and high-school students. In fact, any life-long learner can enjoy this book.

If you choose to read this book aloud, enunciate like your favorite TV newscaster, actor or YouTuber. If you post it online outside of AlligatorZone, tag @alligatorzone or even #alligatorzone. If reading aloud, slow down so that audiences of all backgrounds may understand you clearly. This exercise fine-tunes our personality, making people pause and listen when we speak. That's because the knowledge in this book series will appeal to most people, and this exercise powers up style with substance.

These stories and activities will make you look at the world through the eyes of an entrepreneur and observe opportunities to solve problems everywhere around you. Included with this story, is a set of questions to jog your thinking, and an activity for you to go on a journey of discovery, like an investigative journalist. After you read this book, you can continue learning about more lessons drawn from this book through additional programs offered by AlligatorZone online.

**LIFE-LESSONS:** In this activity-book and program, you will understand, among other things, that

- opportunities to improve things and make a difference exist all around us
- industries require a variety of skills
- there is something to learn even from the most mundane things around us
- the world is an encyclopedia, when we don't hesitate to ask questions
- with practice, one can learn to ask the right questions and solve problems
- persistent efforts can accumulate to grand outcomes despite humble beginnings
- your voice matters — smart companies will consider your opinions seriously
- even learning to think like a startup makes one a standout leader
- mindfulness is possible in everyday activities, and
- understanding a company and its leaders helps us become wiser as consumers.

Enjoy more advanced activities and collaborative learning that we bring to you extending lessons from this book to an online environment, as a premium member. Visit AlligatorZone.org for more.

Have fun with this story and activity.

Ramesh Sambasivan  
Instructional Designer  
AlligatorZone<sup>®</sup> Academy  
October 16, 2019



# Leo and his cool hair-cut



Once upon a time, in the early 1900's, at Sterling High School in Sterling, Illinois, there was a curious student Leo who loved to tinker and experiment a lot. Leo found that he could take a vibrating electromagnetic motor and improve how things worked. Later, when he joined University of Illinois to study engineering Leo designed a vibrating medical massager. His uncle, Dr. J. Frank Wahl started manufacturing the medical massager, and Leo started selling them in his spare time by visiting barber shops.

During these visits to different barber shops, Leo observed how the barbers worked and realized that he could use the electromagnetic motor to invent other gadgets. He decided to redesign the hair clippers that barbers used, such that the motor fits in the hand, making it very compact and convenient for barbers. When his uncle went away for war during the Mexican Revolution, Leo had to take over his manufacturing company. In 1919, he filed a patent for his design of the electric clipper and was awarded the patent in 1921. He purchased his uncle's company and renamed it the Wahl Clipper Corporation. By creating the first electromagnetic motor powered clipper, Leo Wahl changed how barbers around the world did their job.

Leo went on to create many more products for hair stylists, such as the professional hair dryer, curling brushes and attachments for hair-clippers. By the time he died in 1957, Leo Wahl had applied for over 100 patents. Leo's legacy was not only his many inventions, but also a culture of innovation. His company continued creating new products such as the vacuum clipper so that not a hair would fall on the person whose hair was being cut, and even an electromagnetic hand-held soldering iron that became a market-leader soon after launch. The company has over 274 patents related to the barbering, salon and pet grooming industries.

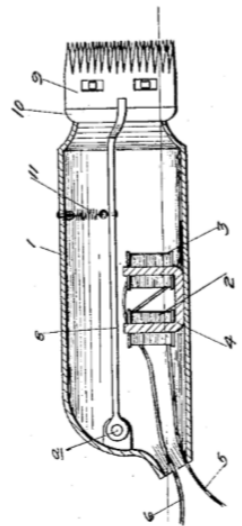
Leo's company has found a way to keep coming up with new products. Their deep knowledge about the personal grooming industry has perhaps helped them maintain their market leadership in the world, with new products to serve several needs. They have lately also started creating devices for grooming pets.

Like hair, the Wahl Clipper Corporation keeps growing. In a 2009 interview, Leo's grandson, Gregory Wahl, now President and CEO of the company, mentioned that they haven't had a layoff in the past 35 years. Today, the company has seven factories on four continents, selling to 165 countries.

Presently, in the United States alone, people spend \$56 billion each year in hair and nail salons, and are expected to spend \$10 billion on wigs and hair-extensions by the year 2023. People around the world are expected to spend \$211.1 billion each year, on hair care, by the year 2025. Venture capitalists are investing in the industry. Machine learning and automation are entering the industry in a big way, while a Ph.D. from MIT is using algorithms to create products to suit our hair-type.

Meanwhile, the Wahl Hair Clipper continues to make history, with its use in space by the crew of the International Space Station.

The next time we visit a barber or a hair stylist, or when we use a Wahl hair clipper at home, let's not forget that our hair is being styled and shaped by an invention that is at least a hundred years old, and that it all started with the tinkering by a high school junior that transformed an entire industry.



## COLOR KEY

1"

3/4"

5/8"

1/2"

3/8"

1/4"

1/8"

LEFT & RIGHT EAR



# Quiz your audience.

*(Your audience could be a family member, a classmate, teacher or viewer).*

How many years ago was Leo Wahl's first patent granted? (Don't use a calculator).

What patented device changed how hair-stylists work?

What grooming appliance was used on the International Space Station?

How many billion dollars is the world expected to spend on hair-care by the year 2025?

What did Leo Wahl invent before he made the hair clipper?

Which high school did Leo Wahl attend when he was tinkering with electromagnetic motors?

Make up your own question.

Next?

Continue to the next page for participating in a field activity, as part of the premium AlligatorZone plan. Not yet a premium member? Visit our website <https://alligatorzone.org>



Alliga-

# AlligatorZone<sup>®</sup> Activity

(for life-long learners who are members of AlligatorZone)

1. The next time you go to a barber shop or salon, or the next time you get a hair-cut, observe all the equipment you see being used, and observe the things that the people working there have to do manually.
2. Think of the chores that can be automated to make their work easier.
3. Think of what else can be automated without losing the social aspects of going to the salon or barbershop.
4. Observe if (or how) they are using any computers or apps.
5. If you are getting a hair-cut, and the hair stylist seems open to having a conversation, steer it towards their work. As the stylist what is the one part of their work that is a real pain for them.
6. If they are open to having the conversation, ask the stylist what is one piece of their work where they wished there were new technology.
7. Ask what piece of equipment always breaks down and should never have been made, or made differently.
8. Keenly observe the entire process from the time you walk into the salon or barbershop till you are done, and make a mental note of improvements that you think can be made in their system of working.
9. Think about your own experience after the hair cut. How could they make every visit exactly the same for you so that your favorite hair style can be replicated by any stylist, anywhere in the world.
10. Summarize your findings and observations.
11. Share your findings by getting on AlligatorZone's learning forum and gain more clarity in the process. Learn collaboratively with a community of life-long learners.
12. Visit AlligatorZone.org for other more advanced learning activities and programs.

Not yet a premium member of AlligatorZone<sup>®</sup>.  
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# Tips for a Parent, Teacher or Mentor

(For mentors and coaches of the younger members on AlligatorZone's Premium Plans)

Here are time-tested tips for mentors who may want to steer the at-home learning.

- 1) **Keep it simple.** Try slipping the field activity into a routine trip to a store or a mall, and make it an 'oh-by-the-way-let-us-stop-and-look' kind of detour on an errand, rather than making a special trip for it. The idea is to remove any semblance of pressure to perform and focus purely on the joy of learning something new in a shared experience for a child with the parent.
- 2) **Go Improv.** Avoid planning and scheduling it in advance. Our goal with the activities is to help children make learning a life-long pursuit and a hobby, not a checklist item that will result in angst until it is completed and cleared.
  - Where an activity involves having a conversation with a stranger at a facility or a manager, consider making it a walk-in experience.
  - This improv-like approach, we believe, teaches the child to be comfortable with uncertain outcomes ("Sorry, the manager is out sick.") and improvise. They learn to play the hand they are dealt in the project (just like in life). They learn to find alternative sources of information and piece things together.
  - We believe it helps them learn how to focus on things they can control and not worry about things beyond their control.
  - We believe that it teaches them to find insights amid chaos and stay focused on the task at hand despite distractions.
- 4) **Learning, not shopping.** We strive to design activities that do not require making purchases. We strive not to make field activities specific to any particular brand. Use on-site observation to complete the learning with your child. Do not make a purchase for this purpose.
- 5) **Feel free to make a script, if it helps.** If you prefer to schedule a meeting in advance with a store's manager or supervisor, prepare a script and encourage your child to be part of the initial phone request while you stay on the call. Let the child own the process. In our recent summer workshop under the coach's supervision and guidance we had the 11-year old student conduct a market research. He told us later that it was the first time he had left a voice message and his first time on a business call. The sense of accomplishment and the confidence gained, is priceless.
- 6) **Let the child lead the conversation.** If the child is not yet ready to speak and start a discussion on topics in our activities, try making it a 3-way conversation and keep it casual, referring decision-making to the child ("What do you think?" or "Does that sound reasonable?") so everyone knows that the child is in charge of the discussion. After the first few times we often see kids lead and handle conversations with aplomb. Let there be no pressure on the child to produce a certain result. Let there be no pressure to use big words or business jargon. If a store owner or employee uses industry parlance or acronyms, seek clarification so the child knows there are no dumb questions.
- 7) **Going off-script is perfectly fine.** Allow the child to find alternative sources of information *under your supervision*, and let them piece things together for their learning. They might find something on TV or Netflix, Youtube, Pinterest or TikTok (if they already use those sites and apps) and be able to connect the dots to fresh insights for improved findings.

Last, but not the least, no matter what, keep it light-hearted and make it a spontaneous and shared experience for both, you and the child.

# Sources

*(These are the publicly available sources used for this story)*

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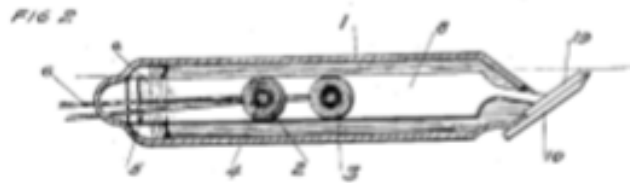
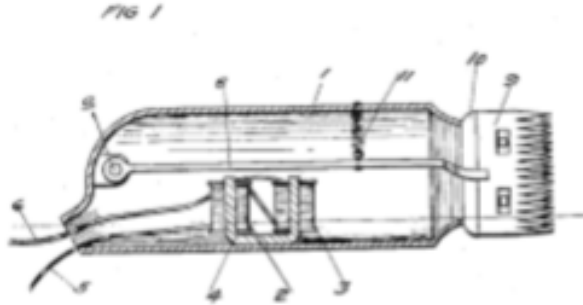
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Jan. 1, 1924

1,479,486

L. J. WAHL  
ELECTRIC CLIPPER  
Filed Oct. 14, 1919



INVENTOR.  
*Leo J. Wahl,*  
BY *Walter N. Haskell,*  
his ATTORNEY.

Image from the patent awarded to Leo J. Wahl, creator of



# Help Others Understand Your Thoughts

(For members on the AlligatorZone Advantage Plan)



We learn better when we try to teach others. This advanced course aims to take your learning to a higher level by helping you obtaining greater clarity in thinking. A coach will be available to guide you with this portion of the program.

Of all the thoughts you gathered in this activity, select one idea or finding you believe is most interesting and worth sharing with others or teaching others.

Most interesting could mean anything — most amusing, most challenging, most environmentally sensible, with the most potential to save people money, or even the most pleasing to the eye. Every idea can be big. No idea is a waste — some ideas may be ahead of their time and may need finishing touches or they may simply be better suited elsewhere, but no idea goes to waste. Voice it. For this part of our program, a coach from AlligatorZone will be available to guide you through the following over a phone call or through an email exchange.

First, prepare to write or paint or draw to start your exercise.

Refer to the first Activity eBook if you have not already chosen a preferred form of expression such as a blog or poem. If you want to change your choice or add another form of expression, please refer to the steps in the first Activity eBook, and start adding a new form of expression such as writing or art or video-recorded talks.

Here are some tips to get you started:

- 1) Think about a change you would like to see in the product you studied.  
For example, if you enjoy studying sciences, use your existing knowledge to ask for one change in how the product is built for a liquid product you like. If you enjoy art, use whatever you know about art to suggest one change to the design, that in your opinion, would make the product better for the world. You could even use knowledge you have gained from watching a TV show, or video clip online. It could be knowledge you gained watching people use the product. All that matters is to keep it simple and get your idea across to others.
- 2) Think of a catchy title, theme or slogan for the idea you have.
- 3) Even a simple idea counts. It could be an absurd idea to make the product into something that wasn't intended as its original use. No idea is silly.
- 4) Think of keywords that describe your idea.
- 5) Ask your parents, siblings and friends to give it a look. Note down their comments. They may have different perspectives we can all learn from.
- 6) Remember, this is not a competition or a contest. All that you will be aiming for is to do better than you did the last time.
- 7) Publish your thoughts for others to learn.