

Reading and Reading Comprehension

FINDING THE MAIN IDEA

To help improve reading comprehension ask the student to:

1. Write new titles for stories or articles as a way of assessing a student's comprehension of the main idea.
2. Have the student give a one-sentence summary of a major incident within the story.
3. State the main idea of a paragraph or article and have the student suggest the details that may be included.
4. Have the student describe the details of a picture or photograph. Have him/her make up a new title for the picture.

LOIS PARKS' TUTORING TIP

Below is a version of an exercise that Lois and her student use especially to facilitate his silent reading comprehension, as well as his writing and spelling skills.

"In a notebook that I keep (for reference over a period of time) I write a variety of directions and/or questions, leaving room for his answers. He silently reads the directions and writes his answers. It has worked very well."

Example:

Write eight words that begin with SH or CH (or end with ICT, ECT, or ACT, etc.)

Write the opposite of the following words.

Write a few sentences using the following words.

Write a few sentences about your wife, (job, children, etc.)

What are the colors in your shirt?

What are the 3rd, 5th and 8th months?

Change the following words into other forms or words.

"I also dictate syllables or sounds and he writes them down, putting them into three columns. Then we compile a list of words made from any combination or order of these sounds/syllables. It helps my student to hear, to spell and put together words that he knows how to spell and many that he has not studied."

Example:

bl	age	ly	gar	mun	ity
com	u	tion	pro	per	ed
man	la	ment	pre	ack	en

MUSIC IS USER FRIENDLY

Ask your student to think of a song s/he knows well and recite the words of the song as you

write them. Write each verse on a separate index card. Read through the song a few times with your student until he/she feels confident with the sequence of verses. Shuffle the cards to scramble verses, then have your student put the index cards in proper sequence. You might notice your student using a few words as a reference for an entire verse or repeating the song aloud. Let him/her take as much time as necessary and don't immediately correct any mistakes. The benefit of this exercise is that the sequence of the verses will not fall into place until the student realizes and corrects any errors. Repeat the exercise until the student assembles the song with relative ease. For another lesson, cut the verses into lines for a greater challenge.

HAVING FUN WHILE LEARNING

Whether you are studying sight words, word families, phonics, contractions, syllables, or compound words, etc., the following games will provide entertainment for adult learners (and you) while practicing reading and writing skills. These and other games can be easily adapted to accommodate nearly any reading strategy being practiced.

Tic-Tac-Toe

Make a die with a vowel printed on each side. Draw a Tic-Tac-Toe board large enough to accommodate the words being studied. Write a word omitting the vowel in each Tic-Tac-Toe square. Throw the die and see if the vowel showing will fit into any of the blanks to make a word. The first player to complete three words horizontally, vertically, or diagonally, wins.

You can also study syllables using Tic-Tac-Toe by writing whole words in the squares and asking the adult learner to choose a word to read, tell the number of syllables, and use the word in a sentence, or you can ask the adult learner to make up his/her own Tic-Tac-Toe game. People who are not comfortable with writing whole sentences will probably feel more comfortable writing single words and playing their game with you.

LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE APPROACH IDEAS

Tutors often express concern about using the Language Experience Method in reading. Some students are quiet and may feel embarrassed about telling a story. Below are listed some suggested topics for language experience stories:

wishes	photo albums	family traditions
fears	sports event	work situations
feelings	favorite TV shows	current events
children	hobbies	holidays

RETELLING STORIES

Ask your student to retell stories that s/he has read. This is a good way to help him/her improve comprehension and retention of information. This will also give your student practice with new vocabulary words. Some suggestions you might use:

First, have your student make a checklist. Tell him/her to write Who?, What?, When?,

Why?, How? Main Idea ? down the left side of a piece of paper. S/he should leave some space for writing between each heading.

Second, demonstrate the retelling of a story for your student. Read a brief article. Use the checklist to see if you included all the important information.

Third, when you finish retelling the story, ask your student if you missed anything important. For skillful readers, you may want to leave something out on purpose. Let the student suggest what you should add. After the discussion, ask your student to retell it once.

Fourth, at your next session have your student do the retelling. Let the student pick a story that interests him/her. Read this story silently. Suggest s/he make a checklist to help write down the important information from the story. After your student has read the story and taken notes, let him/her retell the story. Use the checklist to remember details.

Fifth, as your student finishes you may want to have him/her tell you what s/he liked about the retelling. Be open to suggestions for improving the process.

Source: Rockford Area Literacy Council Newsletter

QUESTIONING PARTNERS

Rationale: 1. Models reading for a purpose
2. Allows student to self-assess comprehension

Materials: Text that is of interest to the student and at the student's instructional level.

Procedures: 1. Tutor and student each silently read the same passage.
2. Tutor asks student a question about the passage.
3. Student then asks tutor a question.
4. Tutor models questioning strategies as prediction or inference.

Example: Joe and Harry like to play baseball. They play every day after work in the park next to their corporate office building. Joe plays shortstop. Harry is the catcher. The other players on the team work at the same corporate office building where Joe and Harry work.

Student: Where do they play baseball? (fact)

Tutor: How old do you think Joe and Harry are? (inference)

Source: LITSTART, Robson, DeVergilio and De Butts.

TEACHING CONTEXT CLUES

The best way to teach students to use context clues when they are reading independently is to teach them the following strategies when they come to a word they don't know.

1. Say the beginning sound.
2. Read the rest of the sentence. THINK.
3. Say the parts that you know. GUESS.
4. Ask someone or skip it and go on.

Other tips which may help the student improve his/her ability to use context clues:

- & Have your student pre-read material silently before reading orally. Discuss troublesome vocabulary.
- & Set purposes for reading. Speed is not important, words are. & Use short, easy selections. Have your student stop frequently to explain in his/her own words what has been read.
- & Use high-interest material, including student-authored materials, e.g., COLLECTIONS '92 or COLLECTIONS '95 or Students Speak Out.
- & Have students scan for important words. Have them guess the context and then read to see if the guess were accurate.
- & Make tape recordings in which key words are omitted. Give your student a copy of the script and have him/her fill in the blank spaces as the tape is played.
- & Use multiple choice questions in which the student fills on blanks, e.g., "Jack _____ a black car to work." (drives, walks, tops). Using answers which look similar works well for more advanced readers (drives, drops, drive).

Source: Locating and Correcting Reading Difficulties. Ekwall and Shanker.