

Reading skills

Reading skills lead a person to interact and gain meaning from written language. There are several components one must master which lead to independently comprehending the intended message being relayed in the written content.

Decoding

Decoding or sounding out words is the first step in reading. Children can decode when they understand that each letter of the alphabet has a corresponding sound. Children then learn how to look at words in print, isolate each separate sound, and then blend them to read the word as a whole. The goal of phonics instruction is to enable readers to become proficient at decoding so they are able to read words on their own and with little effort.

Vocabulary

Good readers increase their vocabulary every time they read and are able to recall these words when they see them again. They begin by developing a sight word vocabulary. Sight words are words that are frequently found often in common speech and books, such as "the," "is," "were," "was" and "said." Generally, these words cannot be sounded out, so readers have to memorize them. Knowledge of these words is essential because they can be found in any book.

Fluency

Fluency is the ability to read accurately with expression and at a speed that lends itself to comprehension. Fluent readers will be able to read smoothly without having to take a lot of time to sound out words. They are also able to use context clues to figure out unknown words.

Fluency is most evident when a person reads aloud, but it can also be seen by the reader's ability to understand what they read. Fluent readers are able to pay attention to the details in a book because they don't have to spend a lot of time sounding out words.

Comprehension

Comprehension is a basic reading skill that develops as children learn to sound out words and recognize sight words. The more they read, the easier it is for them to remember specific things like the main characters, setting and plot. As reading skills progress, children will develop advanced comprehension skills like inferring, evaluating and retelling.

Reading Tips

- Read at a level slightly lower than what you understand. You should not have to look up a lot of words. It's okay to look up a few words.
- Make reading a ritual. Choose a time and place to read every day or week. Commit to this reading time as if it were a job.
- Read what interests you.
- Understand what you'll be tested on. If you're working on your reading skills for a particular test, make sure to learn about the test. There may be specific formats such as advertisements that you'll have to read in the test.
- Find free reading materials. Project Gutenberg is an excellent source, but be careful with public domain books that are written in outdated English. Some words and expressions are no longer in use.
- Visualize what you are reading. Some people try to imagine they are reading a movie or a how-to video.
- Listen and read. Find podcasts or videos that have transcripts and read along silently. You can also read out loud with the recording.
- Relate what you read to your own life. How does the reading apply to you?
- Think about the author or journalist. How would the reading differ if you were the author?
- Check your eyesight. If you haven't had your eyesight checked in the last few years, make an appointment.

Reading Strategies

Here are some strategies for improving your comprehension skills.

- **Skim:** read for the brief idea or overview.
- **Scan:** read for specific details or a specific reason.
- **KWL:** determine what you know about the topic, what you *Want* to know, and what you *Learned*.
- **Skip:** if you don't understand a word or section, keep reading ahead. Come back to the section or word again and try to figure out the meaning. Use a dictionary if necessary.
- Look for **headings, subtitles** and **keywords**.
- Read **out loud:** children read out loud when they first start reading. You can too. Get comfortable hearing your English voice.
- Create **timelines** or **charts:** reorganize what you read in a different format.
- Rewrite in a **different tense**.
- Rewrite in a **different format:** for example, rewrite an article in letter or list form.
- **Illustrate:** if you think you're a visual learner, sketch images or an infographic related to what you read.
- **Write the questions:** as you read, think about which questions you might find on a test or quiz. Write them down and answer them, or quiz a friend.
- **Summarize** or **retell:** you can do this by writing a letter to a friend, writing a blog post, making a web cam video, or just starting a conversation on this topic.
- Learn **affixes:** knowing prefixes and suffixes will increase your word recognition.
- Keep a **vocabulary journal**.
- Get a **vocabulary partner**.
- Use a **pen** or **ruler:** some people find it is easier to read with a pacer. A pen, ruler or fingertip can help you keep your place and prevent your eyes from wandering off. This may not be suitable if you are reading on a computer or mobile device. Adjust the screen to a larger size if necessary.

Reading Levels

It is important to read texts that are at the right level for you - not too easy, not too difficult.

You need to know what your personal reading level is. (Note that your reading level may not be the same as your overall level in English. For example, your reading level is normally higher than your writing level, and higher than your overall level.)

Ask your teacher to help you determine your reading level. If you don't have a teacher, try reading a few texts from different levels. If you have to look up a lot of words in a dictionary, the text is too difficult for you. If you don't have to look up any words, the text is too easy for you. Try something at a lower or higher level. A teacher, librarian or bookstore clerk can help you find something easier or more difficult.

You can also try our reading test to help determine your reading level.

Designate a place and time for reading every day. Your reading level will increase with time.

Activity:

1: Read short story “The Necklace” by Guy de Maupassant and write the summary of story in your own words.

2: Read the passages and answers the given questions.

Mike and Morris lived in the same village. While Morris owned the largest jewelry shop in the village, Mike was a poor farmer. Both had large families with many sons, daughters-in-law and grandchildren. One fine day, Mike, tired of not being able to feed his family, decided to leave the village and move to the city where he was certain to earn enough to feed everyone. Along with his family, he left the village for the city. At night, they stopped under a large tree. There was a stream running nearby where they could freshen up themselves. He told his sons to clear the area below the tree, he told his wife to fetch water and he instructed his daughters-in-law to make up the fire and started cutting wood from the tree himself. They didn't know that in the branches of the tree, there was a thief hiding. He watched as Mike's family worked together and also noticed

that they had nothing to cook. Mike's wife also thought the same and asked her husband, "Everything is ready but what shall we eat?". Mike raised his hands to heaven and said, "Don't worry. He is watching all of this from above. He will help us."

The thief got worried as he had seen that the family was large and worked well together. Taking advantage of the fact that they did not know he was hiding in the branches, he decided to make a quick escape. He climbed down safely when they were not looking and ran for his life. But, he left behind the bundle of stolen jewels and money which dropped into Mike's lap. Mike opened it and jumped with joy when he saw the contents. The family gathered all their belongings and returned to the village. There was great excitement when they told everyone how they got rich.

Morris thought that the tree was miraculous and this was a nice and quick way to earn some money. He ordered his family to pack some clothes and they set off as if on a journey. They also stopped under the same tree and Morris started commanding everyone as Mike had done. But no one in his family was willing to obey his orders. Being a rich family, they were used to having servants all around. So, the one who went to the river to fetch water enjoyed a nice bath. The one, who went to get wood for fire, went off to sleep. Morris's wife said, "Everything is ready but what shall we eat?" Morris raised his hands and said, "Don't worry. He is watching all of this from above. He will help us."

As soon as he finished saying, the thief jumped down from the tree with a knife in hand. Seeing him, everyone started running around to save their lives. The thief stole everything they had and Morris and his family had to return to the village empty handed, having lost all their valuables that they had taken with them.

Question 1: Why did Mike and his family decide to rest under the thief's tree?

- A) Being a large family, they knew that they could easily defeat the thief
- B) It was a convenient spot for taking a halt at night
- C) There was a stream nearby and wood enough to build a house
- D) That was the only large tree that could shelter their large family.

Question 2: Which of the following best describes Morris?

- A) He was a rich businessman
- B) He bullied his wife
- C) He paid his servants well
- D) He was greedy and imitated Mike

Question 3: What did Mike mean when he said “He is watching all this from above”?

- A) He had spotted the thief and wanted to scare him
- B) He was telling his wife to have faith in god
- C) It was just a warning for his family members to stick together
- D) He was begging the thief to help his family

Question 4: Why did the thief return to the tree?

- A) To wait for Mike to return
- B) To set up a trap
- C) To wait for Morris’s family
- D) Not mentioned in the passage

Question 5: How did the fellow villagers react to Mike getting rich overnight?

- A) They were jealous of him

B) They were very excited

C) They followed his example

D) They envied him