

Effective Teaching of Reading Comprehension



Reading comprehension is taught daily for 20 minutes followed by 10 minutes 1:1 reading.

Reading comprehension is:

1. The teacher reading aloud interspersed with discussion. This will focus on:

- Explaining new words providing a definition in language children will understand. When reading a new word, ask the children to echo the word and definition aloud (MTYT).
- Language patterns and ideas
- Pausing, for example, to:
 - *Think out loud about which character the pronoun 'he' refers to in a sentence.*
 - *Think out loud about the content of the text, for example commenting on an unexpected plot twist.*
 - *Introduce new vocabulary by briefly explaining a key word.*
 - *Share a key piece of knowledge, for example briefly explaining the historical context to an event.*

2. When the focus is on building understanding and enjoyment, the teacher reading the text aloud, without the pupils following on the text. This:

- Allows pupils to listen, concentrate and think.
- Hear a model of fluent reading.
- Keeps the story moving along and builds up the flow of a text.
- Allows pupils to appreciate key moments of a story, especially if the reading depends on bringing prosodic elements to life, such as characters' voice or tone of the text.

3. Teacher modelling and explanations is vital. This will:

- Show what skilled readers do to create a mental model.
- Make explicit to pupils how a skilled reader makes sense of a text, works out the meaning of an unfamiliar word or incorporates a new idea into existing background knowledge.

4. Teacher occasionally stops to think aloud, commenting as they read. Teachers might:

- Model how ideas in the text and ideas from pupils' background knowledge are combined to make meaning.
- Show how to decode the unfamiliar word and explain its meaning.
- Comment on and consider the impact of specific words or phrases.
- Model how a skilled reader fills in the gaps as they read.

5. Questioning should be text specific. And:

- Support pupils form a coherent mental model through reflecting on the meaning of what they have read.
- Deepen pupils' understanding – prompting them to think about the ideas and language used in texts they read and hear.
- Drive thinking and productive discussion.
- Promotes elaboration and flexible thinking so pupils integrate new ideas and knowledge into their existing schema.

While questioning is a useful pedagogical tool, on many occasions it is more efficient simply to tell pupils something than ask elaborate questions to reach the same point.

Example:

reading aloud a story where the hero ventures into the heart of a volcano as part of a quest, the teacher might invite pupils to think about what they already know about volcanoes (that is, activating and using background knowledge). At a key point, the teacher might ask pupils to talk to their partner about what they think might happen next (predicting), partly to check that all of them have grasped what has just occurred in the narrative. The teacher might also remind pupils to visualise a character when they read aloud a description. Teachers must judge when it is appropriate to pause for such discussions and when the continuing narrative is all-important. Keeping inside the story is critical.

The national curriculum emphasises that comprehension develops:

through pupils' experience of high-quality discussion with the teacher, as well as from reading and discussing a range of stories, poems and non-fiction.¹³⁰

It is better to spend time developing comprehension by increasing and activating pupils' knowledge than by teaching reading comprehension strategies. Pupils' knowledge can be increased by wide reading across genres and subjects, by focusing on the knowledge they need to understand specific texts, and by vocabulary instruction.

EXAMPLE



Assessment of reading

Every week, the Thursday lesson should be 'taught comprehension' where children are taught the skills of unpicking a set text to answer written questions across the 7 domains. Headstart materials only should be used for this session. This session should focus on the **teacher modelling** the process using a visualiser / whiteboard – verbalising how to answer the questions and modelling how to present this in coherent written format. The pupils can be involved within this process, recording ideas on whiteboards or peer discussion.

Every week, within the Friday lesson, pupils should be assessed on their reading comprehension through independently completing a written reading comprehension using Cracking Comprehension ONLY. Children working significantly below their peers should independently access a Cracking Comprehension from a lower year (this must be agreed with the reading lead). Marking of the Friday comprehension will inform the focus of teaching for the following Thursday. (1:1 reading does not take place within these sessions)

Termly fluency assessment to be completed at the end of each term for all pupils using the same test across the year to provide a clear measure of progress. (Can be completed within 10 minute 1:1 reading time with the last week of term). The fluency tracker must be updated after each assessment point.

All comprehensions and fluency assessments should be stuck into purple reading books as a record for assessments.

1:1 reading

During these 10 minutes, pupils will complete independent reading of a familiar text. This will mainly be their reading book or phonics book. The purpose of this session is to develop their fluency skills and enjoyment of a book – building on applying the strategies and models used by the teacher within the reading comprehension session.

During this time, the teacher (and teaching assistant) will listen to individual readers to assess their fluency and comprehension. This will include:

- Checking for fluency and understanding.
- Supporting in decoding unfamiliar words and share meaning.
- Encouraging children to re-read sections using intonation and expression.
- Asking a couple of questions about what has been read.
- Ensuring appropriate level of challenge of the book and recommending new books.

All pupils will be heard read on a 1:1 across the sessions. Teachers will record this within class reading logs and will stamp the child's reading record.

Storytime

This is daily for 15 minutes

Storytime is reading a whole text without stopping too often for discussion **enabling pupils to encounter lots of different texts, rather than analysing a small number in detail.** This means:

- Pupils develop aspects of accomplished reading, *especially for children who cannot or do not read a great deal in their own time.*
- *Developing children's knowledge and understanding across a range of subjects and contexts.*
- *Pupils know and remember more.*
- *Pupils listen to a text being read without interruption enables them to enjoy a story to a fascinating piece of non-fiction.*

Reading Comprehension Planning format

Term:

Year group:

Text:



Domain coding	Coverage
V	(vocabulary) give/ explain the meaning of words in context. (2a)
R	Retrieve and record information / identify key details from fiction and non-fiction (2b)
S	Summarise main ideas from more than one paragraph. (2c)
I	(inference) make inferences from the text / explain and justify inferences with evidence from the text. (2d)
P	Predict what might happen from details stated and implied. (2e)
E	(Explain) Identify / explain how information / narrative content is related and contributes to meaning as a whole. (2f)
WP	(words and phrases) Identify / explain how meaning is enhanced through choice of words and phrases. (2g)
C	Make comparisons within the text. (2h)

Day	Domain code (for each question)	Key question/prompts/discussion points and page reference

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