

How to carry out the recommendation

1. Teach students how to use several research-based reading comprehension strategies.

Teachers should explain to students how to use several strategies that have been shown to improve reading comprehension because different strategies cultivate different kinds of thinking. The panel believes that six strategies that improve reading comprehension, described

in Table 3, are the most important for reading comprehension in the primary grades. Teachers should explain how the strategies can help the students learn from text—as opposed to having them memorize the strategies—and how to use the strategies effectively.

Table 3. Examples of effective reading comprehension strategies

Effective Strategy	Description	Activities to Promote Strategy Practice ²⁹
Activating Prior Knowledge/ Predicting	Students think about what they already know and use that knowledge in conjunction with other clues to construct meaning from what they read or to hypothesize what will happen next in the text. It is assumed that students will continue to read to see if their predictions are correct.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pull out a main idea from the text and ask students a question that <i>relates the idea to their experience</i>. Ask them to predict whether a similar experience might occur in the text. 2. Halfway through the story, ask students to <i>predict what will happen</i> at the end of the story. Have them explain how they decided on their prediction, which encourages them to make inferences about what they are reading and to look at the deeper meaning of words and passages.
Questioning	Students develop and attempt to answer questions about the important ideas in the text while reading, using words such as <i>where</i> or <i>why</i> to develop their questions.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Put words that are used to formulate questions (e.g., <i>where, why</i>) on index cards, and distribute to students. 2. Have students, in small groups, ask questions using these words.
Visualizing	Students develop a mental image of what is described in the text.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain to students that visualizing what is described in the text will help them remember what they read. 2. Have students examine objects placed in front of them, and later a picture depicting a scene. Remove the objects and picture, and ask students to <i>visualize and describe what they saw</i>. 3. Read a sentence and describe what you see to the students. Choose sections from the text and ask students to practice visualizing and discussing what they see.
Monitoring, Clarifying, and Fix Up	Students pay attention to whether they understand what they are reading, and when they do not, they reread or use strategies that will help them understand what they have read.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Relate each strategy to a traffic sign (e.g., stop sign—stop reading and try to restate in your own words what is happening in the text; U-turn—reread parts of the text that do not make sense). 2. Write different reading comprehension strategies on cards with their signs, and have students work in pairs to apply the strategies to <i>text they do not understand</i>.

(continued)

Table 3. Examples of effective reading comprehension strategies *(continued)*

Effective Strategy	Description	Activities to Promote Strategy Practice ²⁹
Drawing Inferences	Students generate information that is important to constructing meaning but that is missing from, or not explicitly stated in, the text.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teach students how to look for key words that help them understand text, and demonstrate how they can draw inferences from such words. For example, a teacher might show that a passage that mentions “clowns” and “acrobats” is probably taking place in a circus. 2. Identify key words in a sample passage of text and explain <i>what students can learn about the passage from those words.</i>
Summarizing/Retelling	Students briefly describe, orally or in writing, the main points of what they read.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ask a student to describe the text in <i>his or her own words</i> to a partner or a teacher. 2. If a student has trouble doing this, ask questions such as “What comes next?” or “What else did the passage say about [subject]?”

Sources: Appendix D provides more details on studies that tested the effectiveness of these strategies: Beck, Omanson, and McKeown (1982); **Brown et al. (1995)**; **Center et al. (1999)**; **Hansen (1981)**; **McGee and Johnson (2003)**; **Morrow (1984, 1985)**; **Morrow, Pressley, and Smith (1995)**; Morrow, Rand, and Young (1997); **Paris, Cross, and Lipson (1984)**; **Williamson (1989)**. Several other studies were resources for illustrating how to teach these strategies but did not test their effectiveness: **Bramlett (1994)**; **Morrow (1985)**; Paris and Paris (2007); Vaughn et al. (2000).

2. Teach reading comprehension strategies individually or in combination.

Teachers can use single- or multiple-strategy instruction. **Single-strategy** instruction introduces each strategy individually and includes practice for some period of time, usually a few weeks, before the next strategy is introduced. Over time, students come to master a collection of strategies. It may be easier to begin with single-strategy instruction because it allows the teacher and students to focus on one strategy at a time. However, as additional strategies are introduced, teachers should encourage students to use all the strategies they have learned as they read, because students may forget previous strategies or stop using them when the next strategy is introduced. Table 3 provides examples for classroom activities for single-strategy instruction.

Multiple-strategy instruction introduces several strategies simultaneously, and they are practiced in combination so that readers learn to use them together as they read. The panel does not believe that there is enough evidence to advocate the use of multiple-strategy

instruction over single-strategy instruction and therefore recommends that teachers choose the approach that is best for their classroom environment. With either approach, though, the goal should be, ultimately, to teach students several strategies. Multiple-strategy instruction might be more complicated initially, but it familiarizes students with using the strategies together from the very beginning, providing a more authentic, strategic reading experience. The panel refers readers to four examples of multiple-strategy formats that combine strategies with an explicit method of teaching them (see Table 4). These methods have all been the subject of research.³⁰

Key reminders

- Provide students with a sense of how each strategy is applied and how it differs from other strategies they have learned.³¹
- Create opportunities for students to read and practice using strategies with peers, with teachers, and independently.