

Reading Strategies For Parents

What are Reading Strategies?

Reading strategies are purposeful, cognitive actions that students take when they are reading to help them construct and maintain meaning. Reading successfully goes well beyond fluency and word recognition and relies heavily upon comprehension of text. Since reading is a meaning-making task, any behaviors used to enhance student understanding help to create more effective readers. Reading strategies are often categorized as those behaviors designed to help students **before, during, and after** they read. It is important for parents to be aware of the strategies used by their children to make meaning and to build upon those strategies over time and as text becomes more complex.

Reading Strategy Tips:

- Emphasize the importance of reading by modeling reading to your child and by sharing the contents of what you read. Students then equate reading with meaning.
- Recognize your child's reading interests and encourage their development through these interests (sports stories, non-fiction topics, humor, science fiction)
- Talk with your child's teacher about the strategies the school is using to make meaning from text. When possible, repeat those same strategies at home as you work with your child.
- Help your child develop an understanding of text structure: titles, headings, sub-headings, as well as graphs, charts, and diagrams.
- Encourage your child to re-read material to get a deeper understanding of its contents. This is particularly true for non-fiction material (textbook content) and material written above grade level.
- Discuss the importance and approach of reading for different purposes: to entertain, to inform, to persuade, etc. Reading for different purposes helps to define the speed and depth of understanding to apply to that reading.
- Distinguish between skimming, scanning, speed reading and reading for deep understanding. Help your child to understand the appropriate applications of each.
- Encourage "engagement strategies" such as highlighting, using post-it notes, underlining, and developing questions as your child reads. These behaviors help to habitualize the process of making-meaning and ensuring your child is doing more than reading the words on the page.
- Periodically read the same content (newspaper/magazine articles, textbook sections, short stories, or chapters) and discuss its meaning. Look for depth of understanding as well as the use of specific/key vocabulary.
- Emphasize the importance of reading as a life-long habit and encourage its frequent practice.

Web Resources on Reading Strategies:

1. Reading strategies for parents: www.paec.org/david/reading/parents.pdf
2. Strategies for reading comprehension: <http://www.readingquest.org/strat/>
3. Reading comprehension: <http://www.literacy.uconn.edu/compre.htm>

Common Q/A on Reading Strategies:

1. What reading strategies does my child need to learn?

There are many strategies that children may learn to assist them with their reading. These strategies are applied before a child reads the text to activate prior knowledge, during the reading of the text to deepen understanding, and after reading the text to increase the generalization and application to new situations. Generally, however, students need strategies that support the following:

- Word recognition
- Reading for various purposes (skimming, scanning, detailed analysis, etc.)
- Vocabulary development (knowing and understanding word derivatives and roots)
- Comprehension

Within each of these broad categories are a host of more specific ideas and techniques to help students become more efficient and effective readers. It is important to work with your child's school and teacher to determine which of these strategies/areas of focus would be most beneficial to your child.

2. What if my child does not like to read?

For some students, perhaps many more than would be desirable, reading is an acquired taste, one that emerges over time and with appropriate exposure. Students must see adults engaged in reading as both a pleasurable and purposeful activity. Over time, this modeled behavior sets the tone for developing the importance of reading as a life-long behavior. Be attentive to your child's interests and developing skills. Matching those with just the right text can turn the most reluctant reader into an avid connoisseur. Remember to be somewhat non-judgmental about the text your child chooses: cartoons, instructions for video games, fantasy, sports or motorcycle magazines can be the key to unlocking a lifetime of reading pleasure.

3. What is the difference between skimming and scanning?

Skimming and scanning are two different reading skills. The skill of skimming implies looking over a chapter or unit quickly in order to have a general idea of its contents. Scanning suggests the review of a particular text to find a specific piece of information. For example, we skim through a report to have a rough idea of what it says but we scan a page of the telephone directory to find a particular name or number. Skimming requires a greater degree of reading and word recognition skills as it involves a more thorough understanding of the text. Scanning to find a particular piece of information can be achieved successfully by readers who have less developed skills. The more students are encouraged to approach a text by using skimming or scanning techniques, the sooner they begin to realize that they do not have to read and understand every word of a text.

4. What is SQ3R?

SQ3R is a commonly known and used strategy for teaching comprehension of reading material. The acronym stands for Survey, Question, Read, Recite and Review. Students are encouraged to begin reading by **surveying** the contents (looking over the material), **questioning** to enhance understanding, **reading** with purpose, **reciting** in search of answers, and **reviewing** with the intent to remember. As students read more complex text, applying these five steps often deepens

the understanding and allows students to more successfully remember and apply what they have read.

5. Is it important that my child learn the techniques of speed reading?

Speed reading employs a very distinct technique with specific applications. While it is important for all students to improve their reading skills across a wide variety of applications, it may not be important for all students to learn the specific techniques associated with speed reading. It is far more important that all students **understand** the text they are assigned. However, it is also true that students who will be expected to read large quantities of text for specific courses or professional pursuits may benefit from the techniques associated with speed reading.

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