

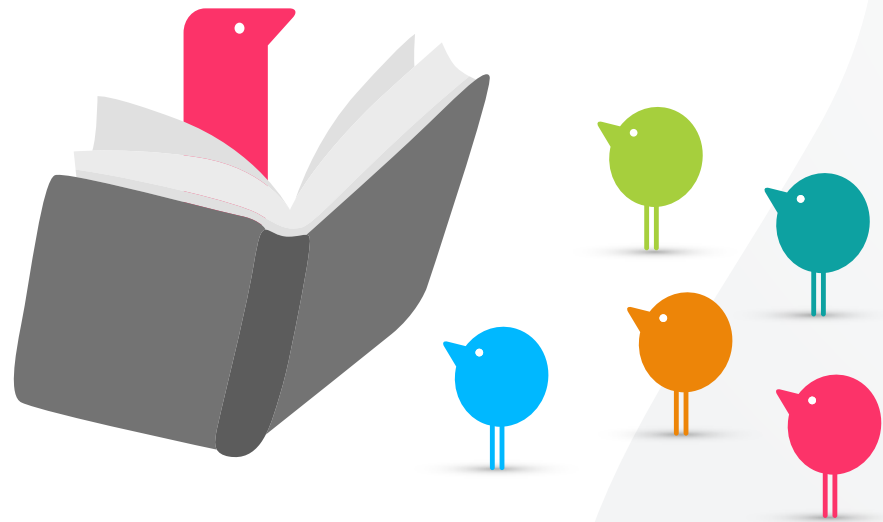
Educator's Guide

Words can't hold us back

Strategies & tools to help your
students become better readers

 **texthelp**[®]





All the best things in life start with a strong foundation, and the ability to read is a critical building block of every student's literacy journey.

Every child is different. Each one of them unique with their own star qualities, strengths and challenges.

For many students, being in a class or learning from home can feel intimidating and even overwhelming, which can lead to a loss in reading achievement.

This practical guide helps you to understand the importance of reading aloud. You'll learn strategies to help students become better and more fluent readers.

5 pillars

of reading instruction

Before we can look at ways of keeping students engaged in oral fluency, there are some key things that need to be established.

We know them commonly as the five pillars of reading, and we've detailed them as a recap here.

1 Phonemic Awareness

Being able to identify, manipulate and substitute the smallest units of sound - the building blocks of speech and the foundation of learning to read.

2 Phonics

Turning those sounds into speech and being able to decode the written word - linking sounds and matching them to letters to formulate a word.

3 Fluency

The ability to read accurately, quickly and with expression - a bridge between word recognition and comprehension.

4 Vocabulary

Knowing what the words mean - helping kids to think more and understand. Better understanding of the meaning of words leads to greater comprehension.

5 Comprehension

The holy grail of reading! Critical thinking - being able to extract meaning, evaluate information and process ideas.



The importance of reading aloud

Reading aloud is perhaps the single most important thing children can do to prepare to learn.

It helps students to move from reading to understand to reading to learn, an important lifelong skill. Effective reading aloud strategies promote word decoding skills, rhythm in reading, and reading with expression.

Below we've set out some ways in which you can build oral fluency skills, whether you're face-to-face in the classroom, or at home.

Modeling

Teachers/caregivers demonstrate appropriate phrasing, rhythm, and sound whether that's amongst a class or on a one-to-one basis.

Guided Oral Reading

Repetitive reading with guidance from a teacher. Reading the same text several times during the week or every night

Vocabulary Development

Learning and decoding words and deriving meaning.

Audio Read-Along Books

Students follow along as they listen to books on tape - perfect for reading outside of class and allows students to pick content that suits their interests.

Comprehension and reading to understand

Reading comprehension is considered one of the most critical skills needed for success in school and in today's modern workplaces.

A major goal of reading comprehension instruction is to help students develop the knowledge, skills, and experiences they must have if they are to become competent and enthusiastic readers.

Below we've list out some strategies to help your students with reading comprehension:

Using prior knowledge/previewing

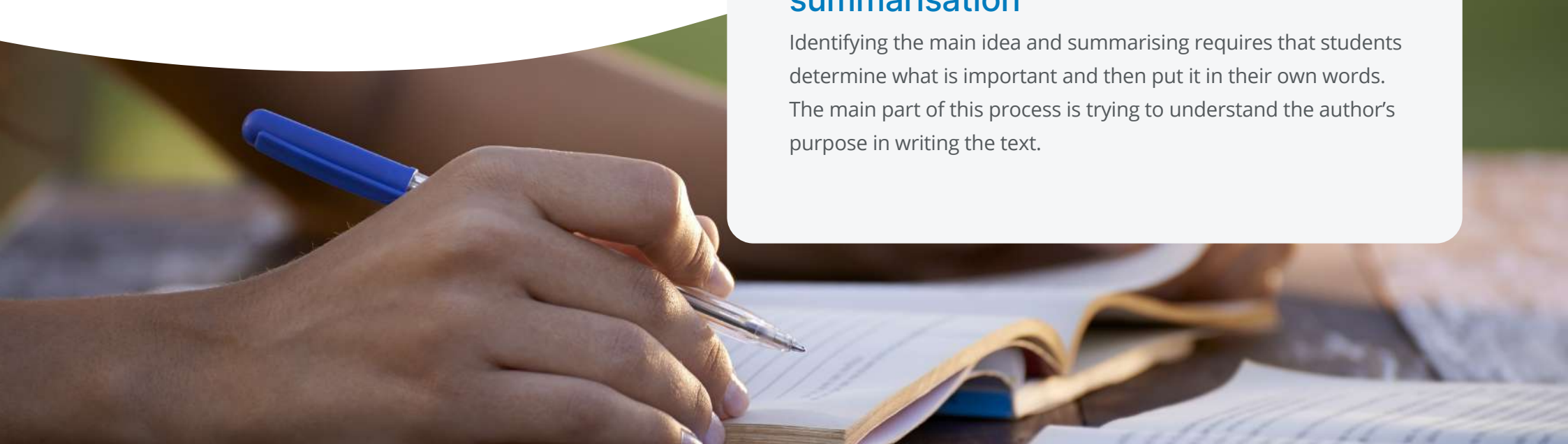
When students preview text, they tap into what they already know that will help them to understand the text they are about to read. This provides a framework for any new information they read.

Predicting

When students make predictions about the text they are about to read, it sets up expectations based on their prior knowledge about similar topics. As they read, they may mentally revise their prediction as they gain more information.

Identifying the main idea and summarisation

Identifying the main idea and summarising requires that students determine what is important and then put it in their own words. The main part of this process is trying to understand the author's purpose in writing the text.



Questioning

Asking and answering questions about text is another strategy that helps students focus on the meaning of text. Teachers can help by modelling both the process of asking good questions and strategies for finding the answers in the text.

Making inferences

In order to make inferences about something that is not explicitly stated in the text, students must learn to draw on prior knowledge and recognise clues in the text itself.

Visualising

Studies have shown that students who visualise while reading have better recall than those who do not (Pressley, 1977). Readers can take advantage of illustrations that are embedded in the text or create their own mental images or drawings when reading text without illustrations.

Retelling

Asking students to retell a story in their own words forces them to analyse the content to determine what is important. Teachers can encourage students to go beyond literally recounting the story to drawing their own conclusions about it.



Ensuring every student succeeds

Identifying gaps in reading is essential, but it's also important to remember that these students may have been struggling for some years.

Individual students might therefore have low self-identity as a reader or may not feel part of a positive reading culture.

The following signs might indicate a fluency struggle:

- Slow reading
- Reading without expression
- Stumbling on words often
- Subvocalising
(mouth movement when reading silently)
- Failure to meet words-per-minute benchmark
- Difficulty explaining what was read



What can you do to ensure no student is left behind in oral fluency progression?

Context clues

Teaching this skill supports self-agency so students can define unfamiliar words independently. The point is not that students memorise each type of context clue. It is more that they come to understand that authors give hints in all kinds of ways to help readers figure out what words mean so they are alert to these devices.

Record students reading aloud on their own

If certain sound-letter combinations or words are causing problems, teachers will benefit from listening to the child read out loud. However, this activity can be extremely stressful in front of a classroom of kids, particularly for a student who struggles with fluency. It is best to avoid calling on struggling readers during group reading and instead have them work through a paragraph on their own. Make a recording that can be analysed later on by a teacher or tutor in order to provide targeted help.

Word attack skills

These strategies help students decode, pronounce, and understand unfamiliar words. They help students attack words piece by piece or from a different angle. For younger students this may be phonics and word families. For older students this may be identifying prefixes, suffixes and Greek or Latin roots.

Make use of a variety of books and materials

If a student has difficulty with reading it can be even more of a struggle to practice with material that is not of interest to them. Sometimes all it takes is getting readers excited about a topic to help them lose themselves in the activity. Try chapter books, comics and poems.

Stress free reading environments

When students are enjoying a book, anxiety and stress are reduced and fluency is enhanced.

It's also possible to foster a relaxing environment by removing any deadlines, time-limits or assessment related goals and just focusing on classroom reading for reading's sake.

Cloze activities

Using cloze activities with struggling readers alters the process of reading from identifying printed words to using meaning for making sense.

Leave the first few lines of the text intact and blank out one of the words. Students need to use their understanding of the text and the sentence structure to identify the words.

The student does not need to identify the specific word, rather a word that makes contextual sense.

One letter can be revealed from the cloze word at a time to narrow down the possibilities of the word. Continue this process intermittently throughout the text. Struggling readers should pre-read the text and skip over the cloze words. This could be done with another student, a pre-recording or a teacher.



Free Reading Resources Your Students Will Love



Dogo news

dogonews.com

DOGO is an online network empowering kids to engage with digital media in a fun, safe and social environment.

Used by millions of students and teachers from around the world, Dogonews has quickly grown into a community of kids and educators engaging positively with current events, books, and movies. DOGOnews.com is a great source for current events, news and non-fictional content for Common Core ELA, Science and Social Studies, with thousands of news articles and new original content added daily.

Focus: Current events

Reading Level: Years 3-12



Youngzine

youngzine.org

Youngzine is an unbiased and engaging media platform where children learn about news and current events shaping our world.

Youngzine's age-appropriate articles explore the context behind the news stories, spark curiosity and critical thought, and develop an openness for perspectives and cultures different from their own, in young minds. Their goal is to help parents and educators create a vibrant community of well-informed and engaged young citizens in an increasingly connected world. Besides news stories, Youngzine provides a platform for children to have their creative writing published and a private classroom portal for teachers to create and manage classroom assignments.

Focus: Current events

Reading Level: Years 5-12

The logo for Science News Explores, featuring the text "ScienceNewsExplores" in a blue, sans-serif font.

Science News for Students

snexplores.org

Science News Explores is an award-winning publication dedicated to providing topical stories on current events in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) for children ages 9 and up, their parents and educators.

Founded in 2003 as Science News for Kids, the digital magazine underwent a major redesign 10 years later, including a name change to Science News for Students. Known as Science News Explores since summer 2022, the magazine's website publishes daily news and features online — all free of cost.

Focus: Science, Science News

Reading Level: Year 6 and up



Teaching Kids News

teachingkidsnews.com

Teaching Kids News (TKN) was started in 2009 by a third grade teacher in Toronto and a classroom parent who worked as a journalist.

They shared a dream of teaching students about what's going on in the world, built on the idea that kids do want to understand the news but often don't have access to news sources that are really informative and still kid-friendly. The site is updated weekly with current events for students in grades 2-8, crafted by a team of professional journalists and teachers. The site is completely free, even including an archive of over 900 articles searchable by year, category and grade level.

Focus: Current events

Reading Level: Years 2-8



National Geographic Kids

natgeokids.com

National Geographic Kids is a well-known, long standing magazine published by the National Geographic Society, but your students don't have to wait for it to come in the mail to start reading and learning.

This online version is filled with fascinating articles about animals, space, the environment, and more that kids can access for free. Students will be engaged and entertained by a "Mission to Jupiter" or a lesson in "5 Reasons Why Sloths are Spectacular".

Focus: Science, Science News

Reading Level: Years 1-6



Double Helix Magazine

<https://doublehelixshop.csiro.au/>

Double Helix magazine is designed to foster an interest in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM). The publishers aim to make it an easy, fun read for people, whether they are already interested in science or not.

Double Helix magazine also promotes critical thinking and literacy in school-aged children and teens. Each issue includes hands-on activities, recipes, experiments, comics, puzzles and prizes to win.

Focus: STEM

Reading Level: Something for Everyone



Time for Kids

timeforkids.com

This kid-centric division of Time magazine covers current events in world news, science, sports, entertainment, and more.

Students can read full articles, news briefs, and even interviews. Many of the articles and interviews are even written by kids on the TFK Kid Reporters team, speaking to famous actors, authors and other professionals about their work or upcoming projects.

Focus: Current events

Reading Level: Year 3 and Up

Australian
Children's
Poetry



Australian Children's Poetry

australianchildrenspoeetry.com.au/

This site is dedicated to showcasing contemporary Australian children's poetry and their work.

Each day a poem is presented as the Poem of the Day, and you can even submit poems for consideration.

Focus: Literature

Reading Level: Something for Everyone