



Reading Strategies to Use with Students

Students should be able to use the following 3 strategies when they encounter a word they do not know.

1. **Context.** Tell students that when they come to a word they don't know, they should read to the end of the sentence to see whether the rest of the sentence defines the word.
2. **Structure.** If the word cannot be identified by context, students should look at the parts of the words. They should look for any familiar word parts that can help them understand the new word.
3. **Sound.** If the word has familiar word parts, students should try to pronounce the word using their knowledge of the sound of consonants and vowels. After trying to give some of the letters the sounds they represent, students should reread the sentence.

Attempt to determine which of the strategies the student is not utilizing. Under each category below, you will find methods to teach the student how to use this strategy when reading.

*Note: Make sure the student is not reading a book that is too difficult. If the student continues to encounter difficulty in a given book, it is important to choose a book on a lower level. A student who makes 10 or more miscues (mistakes) in 100 words is probably reading something too difficult. Generally, materials are appropriate for instruction if the student misses less than 7 of 100 running words in text.

Context:

The context of a word is the words surrounding it. One of the ways to identify words is to use the words in the sentence and to make a prediction about what word would make sense.

- Read familiar pattern books to students, pausing at appropriate places so students can predict the missing word.
- Mask selected words within a book with post-it notes. Have the student make predictions for the words before the tape is removed.
- Present incomplete sentences orally or in writing and have the student suggest words that would make sense.



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When reading and encountering an unknown word:

- Read the sentence aloud for the student, skipping the unknown word, and ask what might make sense in the blank.
- If students substitute a word that does not make sense in the sentence, have the student explain why the word does not make sense and brainstorm better options.
- Model how to problem-solve using context when students mispronounce a word. Share your thinking process aloud with the student.

Structure:

Proficient readers rarely sound out words letter by letter. Instead, they use what they know about common spelling patterns to figure out the word.

- Help students understand common endings of words, such as *-ay* and *-ill*. Write down a word, such as *day*. Read the word, drawing attention to the *-ay* sound. Then substitute different initial consonants (*d, m, s*) and have the student pronounce the new word. For students who are able to progress to the next step, try harder words *today* or *maybe*.
- Teach students how words change when different endings are added such as *-s, -ing, -'s, -ed, -er, or -est*.
 - Present students with a root word, have them pronounce it, and use it in a sentence. Then add one of the endings to the word and have the student pronounce the new word. If an error is made, cover the ending and have the student pronounce the root word alone and then again with the ending.
- Teach students about prefixes and suffixes. Explain that prefixes and suffixes are one pronunciation unit and can be added to root words.
 - Help students learn the four most common prefixes: *un-, re-, in-, and dis-*.
 - Model how to figure out an unfamiliar word using prefixes and suffixes.
- Tell students compound words are two words put together to make a longer word. Explain that looking for compound words can help students pronounce new words. Provide examples and help students identify the compound word and the two words that compose it.



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- Explain to students that long words can be divided into smaller parts or syllables. By knowing how to divide words into syllables, students can figure out unknown words.
 - Have students repeat a multisyllabic word such as bicycle. Then clap your hands for each syllable and stretch out the word such as bi—cy—cle. Apply this strategy when reading.

Sound:

The following activities can be used with any letter students need assistance in learning.

- Have students look through magazines and stories and find pictures that can be associated with the sound *d* (or other letter).
- When students are reading and come across an unfamiliar word that contains the letter being studied, ask the student to reread the sentence and try to guess a word that begins with the initial sound of the unknown word and makes sense in the sentence.
- Orally read sentences where students give a word beginning with the sound being learned. The word must make sense in the sentence. For example, “Jim’s pet is a _____. (dog)”
- Provide sentences or stories with a word missing and have students use the context and knowledge of certain sounds to predict the word.

*Special thanks to educator Debbie Kravitz for providing us these useful reading strategies. This information was compiled from: Johns, J.L, & Lenski, S.D. (2005). *Improving reading: strategies and resources* (4th ed.). Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.



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Reading Comprehension Checklist

1. ____ Who is(are) the main characters in your story?
2. ____ Are any of the main characters like you or like somebody you know? What makes you think so?
3. ____ Describe your favorite character in the story and tell me why the character is your favorite.
4. ____ When do you think the story takes place? Where do you think the story takes place? Why do you think so? (look for evidence.)
5. ____ What is the funniest/scariest/best part of the story?
6. ____ Is there a problem in this story? If so, how does the problem get solved? How would you have solved the problem?
7. ____ Would any of your friends/family enjoy this book? Why or why not?
8. ____ Could you come up with another good title for this book? What would it be?
9. ____ What if you could change the ending of this book, what would it be?
10. ____ Do you think this book would make a good movie? Why or why not?