

99 Ways to Improve Your Students' Reading Comprehension

1. Have word walls; keep them fresh and attractive
2. Give a preview of the reading material
3. Call attention to chapter headings and sub-headings
4. Call attention to end-of-chapter questions
5. Ask for summaries (gateway skill)
6. Pronounce new vocabulary
7. Have students pronounce new vocabulary
8. Practice skimming
9. Practice scanning
10. Practice close reading and re-reading
11. Use sustained silent reading
12. Read aloud
13. Encourage making connections between self and text
14. Summon prior knowledge
15. Use graphic organizers
16. Encourage students to generate their own graphic organizers
17. Teach word components
18. Use annotations
19. Encourage the habit of noticing text patterns
20. Use supportive visuals on the Internet
21. Have a "readable" room, with helpful words and visuals
22. Use writing to support reading; reading to support writing
23. Provide study guides
24. Provide alternate readings and simplified versions to scaffold
25. Encourage the creation of visuals ("draw what you've read")
26. Reinforce subject-to-subject connections in vocabulary
27. Give students opportunities to talk about what they've read
28. Provide various genres
29. Encourage paraphrase
30. Encourage integration of text with graphs, charts, tables
31. Encourage reading in phrases and groups, not single words
32. Read key parts first
33. Encourage awareness of strategies
34. Make students aware of personal reading needs
35. Develop reading habits
36. Ritualize the reading process
37. Build awareness of trouble spots
38. Teach how the text is organized

39. Encourage self-monitoring for comprehension
40. Make the abstract more concrete for students
41. Encourage readers to anticipate
42. Encourage note-taking on readings
43. Set time in class to develop a weekly reading budget
44. Hold students accountable for reading
45. Give alternative assessments
46. Teach that every sentence delivers new information or re-caps
47. Provide large print and other more reader-friendly presentations
48. Provide Internet resources to supply background information
49. Give the necessary background information
50. Teach vocabulary implicitly and explicitly
51. Make connections between English and the Latin-based languages (Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese)
52. Encourage students to keep personal reading journals
53. Teach that words have multiple meanings, but that their meanings are usually related
54. Teach that not all text is to be read at the same pace
55. Assign meaning-making activities following reading
56. Encourage visualization (mental movies)
57. Teach students to view reading from the writer's perspective
58. Teach students to group information into larger and larger groups
59. Use the Golden Oldies: SQ3R and KWL
60. Encourage outlining
61. Build a classroom library consisting of multileveled, diverse reading materials to scaffold the textbook and provide background knowledge
62. Use your classroom website as an online classroom library
63. Join your professional organization and keep informed about literacy development
64. If you teach English, supplement fiction with non-fiction; if you teach a subject other than English, supplement informational text with literature
65. Familiarize yourself with the reading that your students are doing in other subject areas so that you can make connections
66. Provide multiple exposures to new vocabulary
67. Capitalize on the relationship between reading, writing, listening, and speaking
68. Understand that comprehension is the active process of extracting meaning from text, not just word-calling (decoding)
69. Reveal your own thinking as a reader

70. Encourage students to say “This reminds me of…” as they read
71. Encourage students to look for repetition in text because repetition signals main ideas
72. Encourage students to think of reading as a *before, during, and after* process
73. Build on strengths—your own and that of your students
74. Consider offering students choices in reading material
75. Be enthusiastic about school-wide reading initiatives
76. Set forth a purpose for reading (*What am I looking for?*)
77. Increase, support, and value **time-on-text** in class
78. Understand that reading comprehension is the result of the integration of prior knowledge with new knowledge offered in text
79. Offer crossword puzzles that use subject area terminology
80. Set up cooperative learning groups to work through challenging text
81. Understand that sentence length affects readability
82. Understand that pre-Twentieth Century language is probably very challenging for most students. Provide scaffolding.
83. Understand that deficient readers tend to misread the middle of words, resulting in their thinking that words with similar beginnings and endings are the same.
84. When introducing a new word, use it to teach a cluster of words that would be used along with it
85. Teach the many different forms (morphology) a new word
86. Use your library-media specialist as a resource to help you locate various versions of your targeted information
87. Use your reading specialist and special education teachers to help you understand more about your text and your students’ reading strengths and needs
88. Help students pinpoint the place in the text in which their comprehension broke down
89. Understand that improvement in reading comprehension will result from a combination of practice, explicit instruction, and building of background knowledge
90. Treat reading for what it is: a complex mental, metacognitive, and social activity
91. Understand that improvement in reading comprehension results from instruction that is embedded in authentic reading tasks, rather than isolated drill and practice in text that is unrelated to what the student needs to know

92. Understand that the language used in classrooms may differ markedly from a student's home and street language
93. Act on the fact that your students' ability to comprehend text in your subject area is unlikely to improve without your intervention
94. If your course ends in a standardized test, familiarize your students with the appearance, structure, phraseology, and vocabulary of that test
95. Help students connect pronouns to their referents, esp. *it, that, which, they*
96. Define what you think may be new words as you speak
97. Practice "gradual release of responsibility" to make students independent readers
98. Build awareness that successful readers are problem-solvers who give themselves the environment and support systems that they need to make meaning from text: Reading comprehension results from intentional behaviors, not luck.

99. Assume that success is possible!!

A Tale of Two Principals¹

| High School A | High School B |
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| <p>“A new high school principal...gave back to teachers time formerly used for Sustained Silent Reading. He warned teachers that students should be ‘focused on the instruction at hand’ rather than ‘sitting around reading’ during class time. ...the principal explained, ‘Students have to be taught. We need more time focused on direct instruction.’</p> <p>During the next two years, book circulation at the high school library plummeted, and the school’s overall achievement on the content standards tests declined. Teachers understood why taking away students’ time to ‘just read’ might have resulted in a decline in reading scores, but they were shocked that scores sagged in history and science as well. “</p> | <p>“Principal Doug Williams, a former math teacher...announced to the faculty of Hoover High School, ‘If we are going to teach our students to read, we need to provide them with <i>opportunities</i> to read.’ He allocated 20 minutes each day for Sustained Silent Reading and provided his staff with the resources and professional development necessary to ensure that students had time to read books of their choice.</p> <p>“The result? Hoover has met state accountability targets, and students’ average reading level as measured by the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test has risen from 4.3 to 7.2. Although the independent reading initiative cannot take full credit for this, Hoover teachers credit the Sustained Silent Reading time with a significant portion of the increased achievement.</p> |

¹ Gay Ivey and Douglas Fisher. “Learning From What Doesn’t Work.” *The Best of Educational Leadership* 2005-2006. 7.