Some very helpful tips to help develop our students’ comprehension skills. However, this will take some time to train our students into this art. Therefore, it is best to plan this from the new session.

For exams, please ask your students to read the questions first, underline the keywords in them, carefully analyse to find what is being asked of them. Once they have grasped what they are required to answer then search for and hone onto the lines that have the required answers. It is very important to teach students the starting phrases of questions and what they denote.

# All the best in your endeavours! Thank you

**How to improve comprehension Skills in students?**

The following strategies by students with teachers’ facilitation may prove helpful:

* Identify where the difficulty occurs

"I don't understand the second paragraph on page 76."

* Identify what the difficulty is

"I don't get what the author means when she says, 'Arriving in America was a milestone in my grandmother's life.'"

* Restate the difficult sentence or passage in their own words

"Oh, so the author means that coming to America was a very important event in her grandmother's life."

* Look back through the text

"The author talked about Mr. McBride in Chapter 2, but I don't remember much about him. Maybe if I reread that chapter, I can figure out why he's acting this way now."

* Look forward in the text for information that might help them to resolve the difficulty

"The text says, 'The groundwater may form a stream or pond or create a wetland. People can also bring groundwater to the surface.' Hmm, I don't understand how people can do that… Oh, the next section is called 'Wells.' I'll read this section to see if it tells how they do it."

**Questioning and answering questions:**

Questions can be effective because they:

* Give students a purpose for reading
* Focus students' attention on what they are to learn
* Help students to think actively as they read
* Encourage students to monitor their comprehension
* Help students to review content and relate what they have learned to what they already know

The Question-Answer Relationship strategy (QAR) encourages students to learn how to answer questions better. Students are asked to indicate whether the information they used to answer questions about the text was textually explicit information (information that was directly stated in the text), textually implicit information (information that was implied in the text), or information entirely from the student's own background knowledge.

There are four different types of questions:

* "Right There"

Questions found right in the text that ask students to find the one right answer located in one place as a word or a sentence in the passage.

Example: Who is Frog's friend? Answer: Toad

* "Think and Search"

Questions based on the recall of facts that can be found directly in the text. Answers are typically found in more than one place, thus requiring students to "think" and "search" through the passage to find the answer.

Example: Why was Frog sad? Answer: His friend was leaving.

* "Author and You"

Questions require students to use what they already know, with what they have learned from reading the text. Student's must understand the text and relate it to their prior knowledge before answering the question.

Example: How do think Frog felt when he found Toad? Answer: I think that Frog felt happy because he had not seen Toad in a long time. I feel happy when I get to see my friend who lives far away.

* "On Your Own"

Questions are answered based on a students prior knowledge and experiences. Reading the text may not be helpful to them when answering this type of question.

Example: How would you feel if your best friend moved away? Answer: I would feel very sad if my best friend moved away because I would miss her.

**Generating Questions:**

By generating questions, students become aware of whether they can answer the questions and if they understand what they are reading. Students learn to ask themselves questions that require them to combine information from different segments of text. For example, students can be taught to ask main idea questions that relate to important information in a text.

**Recognizing Story Structure:**

In story structure instruction, students learn to identify the categories of content (characters, setting, events, problem, resolution). Often, students learn to recognize story structure through the use of story maps. Instruction in story structure improves students' comprehension.

**Summarizing:**

Summarizing requires students to determine what is important in what they are reading and to put it into their own words. Instruction in summarizing helps students:

* Identify or generate main ideas
* Connect the main or central ideas
* Eliminate unnecessary information
* Remember what they read

**Instruction Is Effective:**

Research shows that explicit teaching techniques are particularly effective for comprehension strategy instruction. In explicit instruction, teachers tell readers why and when they should use strategies, what strategies to use, and how to apply them. The steps of explicit instruction typically include direct explanation, teacher modeling ("thinking aloud"), guided practice, and application.

* Direct explanation

The teacher explains to students why the strategy helps comprehension and when to apply the strategy.

* Modeling

The teacher models, or demonstrates, how to apply the strategy, usually by "thinking aloud" while reading the text that the students are using.

* Guided practice

The teacher guides and assists students as they learn how and when to apply the strategy.

* Application

The teacher helps students practice the strategy until they can apply it independently.

Effective comprehension strategy instruction can be accomplished through cooperative learning, which involves students working together as partners or in small groups on clearly defined tasks. Cooperative learning instruction has been used successfully to teach comprehension strategies. Students work together to understand texts, helping each other learn and apply comprehension strategies. Teachers help students learn to work in groups. Teachers also provide modeling of the comprehension strategies.

*Adapted from Adler, C.R. (Ed). 2001. Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read, pp. 49-54. National Institute for Literacy. Retrieved Nov. 1, 2007, from http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/reading\_first1text.html.*