

Enhancing reading comprehension skills



Reading is a complex cognitive process of decoding symbols in order to construct or derive meaning (reading comprehension). It is a means of language acquisition, of communication, and of sharing information and ideas. Like all language, it is a complex interaction between the text and the reader which is shaped by the reader's prior knowledge, experiences, attitude, and language community which is culturally and socially situated. Reading is all about information. It's not about the number of words you read, but the amount of value you extract from them.

The key to improved reading comprehension isn't moving your eyes across a page more quickly. It's about creating a mental framework that helps you process words and ideas. The reading process requires continuous practice, development, and refinement. In addition, reading requires creativity and critical analysis. Consumers of literature make ventures with each piece, innately deviating from literal words to create images that make sense to them in the unfamiliar places the texts describe. Because reading is such a complex process, it cannot be controlled or restricted to one or two interpretations.

There are no concrete laws in reading, but rather allows readers an escape to produce their own products introspectively. This promotes deep exploration of texts during interpretation. Readers may use morpheme, semantics, syntax and context clues to identify the meaning of unknown words. They integrate the words they have read into their existing framework of knowledge or schema. Readers use a variety of reading strategies to assist with decoding (to translate symbols into sounds or visual representations of speech) and comprehension.

As Mortimer J. Adler, an American author, educator and philosopher, once said, “ Reading is a basic tool in the living of a good life. ” It perfectly describes how important reading is in the course of our life. We are tied to reading since infancy and childhood. Dawn Adams said, “ Show me the books he loves and I shall know the man far better than through mortal friends. ” Books are the best nutrients for your mind. People who like reading have better writing skills and analytic ability because their thinking is well trained by reading on a long-term basis.

These abilities are established on a brick-and-mortar grounding, and brought to you by a commitment to reading. The importance of reading is undeniable; the best way to benefit from it is by reading, from now on.

According to James Surowiecki (2013), reading is a genuinely tactile experience—how a book feels and looks has a material impact on how we feel about reading. This isn’t necessarily Luddism or nostalgia. The truth is that the book is an exceptionally good piece of technology—easy to read, portable, durable, and inexpensive. Unlike the phase-change move toward digital that we saw in music, the transition to e-books is going to be slow; coexistence is more likely than conquest.

The book isn’t obsolete. According to Charles Scribner Jr. , Reading is a means of thinking with another person’s mind; it forces you to stretch your own. According to Francis Bacon (1625), Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man. And therefore, if a man write little, he had need have a great memory; if he confer little, he had need have a present wit: and if he read little, he had need have much cunning, to seem to know that he doth not. According to Marcel Proust, reading, in its

<https://assignbuster.com/enhancing-reading-comprehension-skills/>

original essence, is that fruitful miracle of a communication in the midst of solitude.

According to Norb Winslow (2011), Reading comprehension can simply be defined as understanding what you are reading. Even though that sounds easy it really isn't, because it requires our full attention and focus when reading. If you aren't properly processing what you are reading as you are reading through text then you have poor reading comprehension, and if you do then vice-versa. It's pretty much impossible to try and captivate the act of comprehending, but that's why improving your comprehension is a process. Essentially reading comprehension works by series of cognitive processes.

When a person begins to read, the brain is using its understanding of individual sounds in language, phonics (connection between letters and sounds and the relationship between sounds, letters, and words) and the ability to construct a meaning from what you are reading, which is the essentially the end result: comprehension. There are elements that make up the technique of reading comprehension: vocabulary knowledge & text comprehension. In order to understand what you're reading you must be able to understand the vocabulary used in the piece of writing you're reading.

If the individual words have no meaning then the general story won't either. Children can use what they know about vocabulary to try and process it, but they also require to continually be taught new words. Aside from understanding each word in a text, a child also has to be able to make sense of them and has to be able to come up with a conclusion of what it truly

means, this process overall is referred to as text comprehension. It's much more complex and varied than just basic vocabulary knowledge. Readers apply quite a few different text comprehension strategies to enhance reading comprehension.

These include surveillance for understanding, answering and developing questions, summarizing & being aware of and using a text's construction to aid comprehension. Without comprehension, reading is simply like keeping track of symbols on a page with your eyes & sounding them out. Think about being presented with a story written in Egyptian hieroglyphics with no understanding of their significance. You may value the words visually then be able to come up with various small pieces of meaning from the page, but you are not really reading through the story. The letters on the page do not possess a meaning. They are really simply symbols.

People read for many purposes however understanding is invariably an integral part of their objective. Reading comprehension is essential simply because without it reading doesn't provide the reader with any specific information. Reading comprehension is truly crucial to existence. Much continues to be written about the importance of practical literacy. In order to endure and thrive in today's world individuals will have to be able to comprehend common texts such as bills, mortgage agreements (leases, purchase contracts), instructions on packaging and travel documents (bus and train schedules, maps, travel directions).

Reading comprehension is a vital component of functional literacy. Consider the potentially dire consequences of not having the ability to comprehend

dosage directions on a bottle of medicine or even warnings on a container of dangerous chemicals. With the ability to understand whatever they read, individuals are able not only to live securely and efficiently, but additionally to continue to develop socially, emotionally and intellectually. According to Grabe (1997), reading is an interaction between reader and text. Grabe claims that reading requires efficient knowledge of world and a given topic also an efficient knowledge of the language.

As it is stated, reading requires a rich background, and also some ability to comprehend the texts. On the other hand, Rebecca & Sadow (1985), claim that reading is related to language and it requires being efficient in L2. When we grow up and start our learning life in high school and university, we continue reading for different purposes, like finishing schoolwork or reading newspaper. Stepping into working life doesn't make us stop reading. We still read in some way or other, for work or entertainment purposes. That said the importance of reading is beyond doubt. But how important is it?

For some, an auto-response might be: reading enriches our knowledge. This answer is partially true. It's true when you only read as you are told to, such as finishing homework or a reading report. It's also true when you think reading is only an activity that helps kill your time when you have nothing better to do. In both cases, reading is certainly not of substantial importance to you, and you won't benefit much from reading, except for gaining knowledge to keep competitive in school. However, when you enjoy reading and embrace it with full force, reading will have a much more fruitful impact on your life than when you treat it casually.

With a changed mentality, reading not only broadens your knowledge, but also takes you to another level. A change of attitude can determine how reading affects you and your life. Subtle and undetectable as its fruits may seem, reading shapes your thinking and strengthens your analytical ability. Through reading, you tap into an unlimited reservoir of knowledge, and can explore as much as you want to know. Over time, you can unveil your potential that was untouched. When you are faced with problems to solve, you will have more resources than others.

Armed with such an arsenal which you have collected in your reading years, you are capable of confronting the problems with efficiency and flexibility. It is a well-known fact that when there were no televisions or computers, reading was a primary leisure activity. People would spend hours reading books and travel to lands far away-in their minds. The only tragedy is that, with time, people have lost their skill and passion to read. There are many other exciting and thrilling options available, aside from books. And that is a shame because reading offers a productive approach to improving vocabulary and word power.

It is advisable to indulge in at least half an hour of reading a day to keep abreast of the various styles of writing and new vocabulary. It is observed that children and teenagers who love reading have comparatively higher IQs. They are more creative and do better in school and college. It is recommended that parents to inculcate the importance of reading to their children in the early years. Reading is said to significantly help in developing vocabulary, and reading aloud helps to build a strong emotional bond between parents and children.

The children who start reading from an early age are observed to have good language skills, and they grasp the variances in phonics much better.

Reading helps in mental development and is known to stimulate the muscles of the eyes. Reading is an activity that involves greater levels of concentration and adds to the conversational skills of the reader. It is an indulgence that enhances the knowledge acquired, consistently. The habit of reading also helps readers to decipher new words and phrases that they come across in everyday conversations. The habit can become a healthy addiction and adds to the information available on various topics.

It helps us to stay in-touch with contemporary writers as well as those from the days of yore and makes us sensitive to global issues. Comprehension requires the reader to be an active constructor of meaning. Reading research has demonstrated that readers do not simply “ perceive” the meaning that is IN a text. In fact, expert readers co-construct meaning WITH a text. The research base shows that reading is a “ transaction” in which the reader brings purposes and life experiences to bear to converse with the text. This meeting of the reader and the text results in the meaning that is comprehension.

Comprehension always attends to what is coded or written in the text, but it also depends upon the reader’s background experiences, purposes, feelings, and needs of the moment. That’s why we can read the same book or story twice and it will have very different meanings for us. We, as readers, are an equal and active partner with the text in the meaning-making process of comprehension. It’s clear that reading comprehension is a complex cognitive process that depends upon a number of ingredients all working together in a

<https://assignbuster.com/enhancing-reading-comprehension-skills/>

synchronous, even automatic way. Vocabulary clearly plays a critical role in understanding what has been read.

The reader must also be intentional and thoughtful while reading, monitoring the words and their meaning as reading progresses. And the reader must apply reading comprehension strategies as ways to be sure that what is being read matches their expectations and builds on their growing body of knowledge that is being stored for immediate or future reference. Reading comprehension is the ability to read text, process it and understand its meaning. An individual's ability to comprehend text is influenced by their traits and skills, one of which is the ability to make inferences.

If word recognition is difficult, students use too much of their processing capacity to read individual words, which interferes with their ability to comprehend what is read. There are a number of approaches to improve reading comprehension, including improving one's vocabulary and reading strategies. Reading comprehension skills are based on earlier stages of reading development, including oral reading and reading speed/fluency. Without developing these earlier reading skills, students must continually focus on decoding letters and words, rather than pursuing the progression to meaning and understanding.

Reading comprehension skills allow readers to move from elementary reading to effective reading. Reading begins as an exercise in decoding letters and sounding out words. This is passive reading, where we focus on memorizing patterns and practicing fluency. The bridge from passive to active reading requires reading comprehension skills. Reading

comprehension is the ability to understand what we read — where words have context and texts have meaning. Reading comprehension skills allow us to read proficiently, learn effectively, problem-solve, strategize, conceptualize, and succeed in life.

Without reading comprehension skills, many students are left behind.

Reading comprehension skills are necessary for meaningful and effective reading. Early reading is grounded in strong cognitive skills such as attention, auditory analysis, sound blending, sound segmenting, memory, processing speed, and visualization. Therefore, the key to improving reading comprehension skills is to attack weak cognitive skills at the foundational level. Reading comprehension is a very complex cognitive activity.

Comprehenders are not viewed as merely passive recipients of information but as active constructors of meaning.