



# Getting Started

## ◎ Strategy Basics

Strategies are deliberate, intentional, purposeful actions a learner can take to accomplish a specific task or become skilled (Afflerbach, Pearson, & Paris, 2008; Manoli & Papadopoulou, 2012). Strategies make something a reader is attempting doable, actionable, and visible through a step-by-step procedure. Strategies offer a temporary scaffold to support a student's independent practice. Eventually, after the reader develops automaticity, the need for the strategy fades away. Strategies are a means to an end, not an end unto themselves (Duke, 2014b).

Researchers, practitioners, and theorists use the terms *skill* and *strategy* differently (e.g., Afflerbach, Pearson, & Paris, 2008; Beers, 2002; Harris & Hodges, 1995; Harvey & Goudvis, 2007; Keene & Zimmermann, 2007; Sinatra, Brown, & Reynolds, 2002; Taberski, 2000; Wiggins, 2013), with some using the word *strategy* to refer to a set of seven processes specific to comprehension (e.g., determining importance, visualizing, activating prior knowledge, and so on). In this book, you'll see those processes referred to as *skills*. As for strategies, you will find hundreds of them in this book that will support not only reading comprehension but also other important reading goals such as engagement, reading with accuracy, conversing about books, and more.

## What Is the Research Base for Strategy Instruction?

The rationale for using strategies in the classroom is supported by an enormous research base (e.g., Alexander, Graham, & Harris, 1998; Chiu, 1998; Dignath & Büttner, 2008; Donker et al., 2014; Georgiou & Das, 2018; Haller, Child, & Walberg, 1988; Hattie, Biggs, & Purdie, 1996; Ho & Lau, 2018; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995; Weinstein, Husman, & Dierking, 2000). Strategy instruction has been demonstrated to positively impact *all* students, no matter their age, socioeconomic background, or gifted designation or if they have a learning disability (Berkeley, Scruggs, & Mastropieri, 2010; Donker et al., 2014; Okkinga et al., 2018; Shanahan et al., 2010). Children who learn to use strategies are more *self-regulated*, actively working to use what they know to be successful and engaged with reading, which ultimately enhances their learning and overall performance (Duke & Cartwright, 2021; Zimmerman, 1986, 2002).

Reading strategies have been shown to improve all areas of reading including, but not limited to, student's motivation and engagement (see McBreen & Savage, 2021), word-level reading (see Steacy et al., 2016), vocabulary acquisition (see Wright & Cervetti, 2017), comprehension (see Samuelstuen & Bråten, 2005), fluency (see Stevens, Walker, & Vaughn, 2017), and more.

Strategies offer *procedural* knowledge (i.e., “how-to”), which a learner can apply with intention and purpose, aligned to a reading goal (Alexander, Graham, & Harris, 1998). Research has shown even more effective results when strategies students learn are coupled with *conditional* knowledge (i.e., knowing *when* to apply them [Donker et al., 2014]), when they are meaningfully tied to students' goals, and when learners have agency and choice in their use (Allen & Hancock, 2008; Mason, 2004).

Throughout the literature on strategies, researchers tend to organize them into three main types: *cognitive*, *metacognitive*, and *management* (e.g., Boekaerts 1997; de Boer et al., 2018; Mayer, 2008; Pressley, 2002a; Weinstein & Mayer, 1986). The three hundred-plus strategies in this book address all categories and subtypes (see chart on page 2).

### Key Ideas from the Research

#### Strategies:

- provide actionable steps.
- are a means to an end (skills, goals), not an end in and of themselves.
- offer a temporary scaffold. As readers become increasingly automatic, conscious attention to a strategy fades.
- can support readers' improvement in all areas of reading—from motivation to decoding to fluency to comprehension and more.
- benefit all students—no matter their age, developmental level, or abilities.
- support active self-regulation, a key to learning and performance.

## Types of Strategies, Definitions, and Examples

| Type of Strategy  | Definition   | Examples   | Example Strategies from This Book                          |
|---|--|--|--|
| Cognitive<br><br>(see Brown & Palincsar, 1989; Mayer, 2008; Pintrich et al., 1991; Weinstein, Husman, & Dierking, 2000) | <i>Strategies used to increase understanding and make learning more meaningful</i>                             | Rehearsal strategies such as repeating information to remember it  | <b>9.5</b> Read, Cover, Remember, Retell                   |
|   |  | Elaboration strategies such as building connections between information and summarizing and paraphrasing   | <b>5.16</b> Summarize with “Uh-oh . . . UH-OH . . . Phew!” |
|   |  | Organization strategies such as drawing graphs or pictures to remember information or to represent relationships                                   | <b>8.14</b> Consider Structure: Problem/Solution           |
| Metacognitive<br><br>(see Schraw & Dennison, 1994; Veenman, Van Hout-Wolters, & Afflerbach, 2006; Zimmerman, 2002)      | <i>Strategies that activate and regulate cognition and help learners to monitor and control their learning</i> | Planning strategies such as setting goals, making a plan for learning time, deciding an order in which to approach a set of tasks                  | <b>2.9</b> Read with a Purpose in Mind                     |
|   |  | Monitoring strategies such as checking on one’s learning/comprehension and taking action to correct misunderstandings, such as rereading           | <b>3.9</b> Check In with Yourself, Reread, Fix Up          |
|   |  | Evaluating strategies such as analyzing whether and how much was learned   | <b>7.25</b> Analyze the Development of Theme               |
| Management<br><br>(see Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Pintrich, 2000)   | <i>Strategies used to manage context to improve learning</i>   | Management of effort strategies such as staying focused on the task(s) despite distractions or challenges  | <b>2.17</b> Consider Mind over Matter                      |
|   |  | Management of peers and others strategies such as working with peers or teachers in cooperation or collaboration to learn                          | <b>12.11</b> Reflect and Set Goals for a Conversation      |
|   |  | Management of the environment strategies such as using materials appropriately during learning, setting up a learning environment to be successful | <b>2.14</b> Choose Your Reading Environment                |

## When Do I Teach Strategies?

Strategies are helpful any time you want students to get better at their reading, writing about reading, or conversation about reading. Strategies simply suggest to children *how to do it*, whether the *it* is reading with more stamina, decoding a word, reading with expression, figuring out the main idea, and so on. Teaching strategies means teaching explicitly, and that’s good teaching for all children (e.g., Donker et al., 2014; Ehri, 2020; Shanahan et al., 2010; Williams, 2005).

### During Your ELA/Literacy Block

If you teach reading as a subject area, reading strategies can help. Whether your students are all reading the same book, they’re split into book clubs or literature circles, or they’re all reading books they’ve chosen independently; whether you call your literacy time “balanced” or “comprehensive” or “structured”; whether you read novels together as a class, run a reading workshop, or teach using a core program; no matter who published your curriculum or how the lessons are organized—strategies have an important place. Also, it’s a misconception that children *learn to read* until third grade and then they *read to learn* thereafter. Students of all ages continue to learn to read with increasing insight, depth, and engagement; can consistently add to their vocabulary knowledge; and can improve their conversations and writing about reading (e.g., Pearson, Moje, & Greenleaf, 2010; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012). Strategies belong in every literacy classroom, from preschool through high school . . . and beyond!



### **During Whole-Class, Small-Group, or One-on-One Instruction**

Strategies offer students a how-to that helps the learning click more quickly and makes what you're teaching transferrable. If you're teaching a lesson to the whole class, before sending students off for independent practice, add a strategy to your demonstration to give students the steps they need to repeat what you showed them when they are working on their own. When you read aloud to your students, plan stopping places to think aloud and model strategies. If you find a small group of students in need of the same support, pull them together and offer a strategy with some guided practice. When students are in a book club, listen in to their conversation and consider if they could benefit from a strategy to deepen comprehension or conversation skills. When you're working with students one on one, quickly assess and then offer a strategy for what they can try next.



### **During Content Studies**

During content studies you undoubtedly have knowledge-based goals and are explicitly teaching children information and vocabulary aligned to them. However, if children are reading (or writing or speaking about) texts during any part of your lessons, chances are they can learn to read, write, and speak with more care and comprehension by learning reading strategies along the way. If you teach some lessons focused on *what* you want students to know, and other lessons focused on *how* students access that knowledge from texts, they will learn even more content (Cervetti et al., 2012; Guthrie et al., 2004; Romance & Vitale, 2001).

Skills lists within each margin show which skill(s) the strategy supports.

A **Strategy** is a step-by-step how-to that can be used in any instructional format and in any subject. It's important that you give children a *how-to* to scaffold their practice until they develop automaticity.

## 11.14 Get Help from Cognates

### Skills

- analyzing
- inferring
- activating prior knowledge

### Progression

Is able to use context and prior knowledge to infer and is ready to learn to analyze word parts and apply a knowledge of grammar, morphology, and/or etymology.



### Hat Tip

**No More “Look Up the List” Vocabulary Instruction**  
(Cobb & Blachowicz, 2014)

### Research Link

In a study of Spanish-English bilingual kindergarteners and first graders, researchers found that children who were exposed to more Spanish knew more English cognates than those who received balanced amounts of Spanish and English or who were exposed to more English (Pérez, Peña, & Bedore, 2010). A speaker of two (or more) languages has an expanded repertoire of linguistic resources, with particular word-learning benefits when languages have related origins.

**Strategy** If the word looks, or is pronounced, like a word you know from another language, think about what the word means in the other language. See if a similar meaning would fit in the context in which you encountered the English word.

**Teaching Tip** This strategy would be best for students who are learning a second language or who is studying another language. Be aware that some words are similar in sound. Some are phonologically similar and orthographically similar (“perfect cognates” (e.g., *animal* [English]–*animal* [Spanish]) and some are phonologically similar and orthographically similar (e.g., *accidental* [English]–*accidental* [Spanish]). Especially tricky are “false cognates” which are phonologically similar but not related in meaning (e.g., *foot* [English]–“*pie*” [Spanish]) or *recorder*, which means “to remember or remind” in Spanish (Rosen, 2010).

### Prompts

- Do you know a word in another language that sounds like this word?
- Think about what the word means in the other language.
- What might this word mean in English?
- Think about how it’s used here—does the word fit here?

**Prompts** can be used when supporting students’ practice through feedback and coaching. Prompts help the strategy go from something you *tell* or *demonstrate* to something you *guide* students to do. Prompts, especially those in the comprehension chapters, are great to use as turn-and-talk or stop-and-jot prompts for interactive read-aloud lessons.

Hey! That sounds just like a word I know...

| In English... | In Spanish... |
|---------------|---------------|
| Abuse         | Abuso         |
| Abbreviate    | Abreviar      |
| Accept        | Aceptar       |
| Majority      | Mayoría       |
| Realization   | Realización   |

① **THINK** of a word you know in another language that looks for sounds like the word.

② **THINK** what does the word mean in the other language?

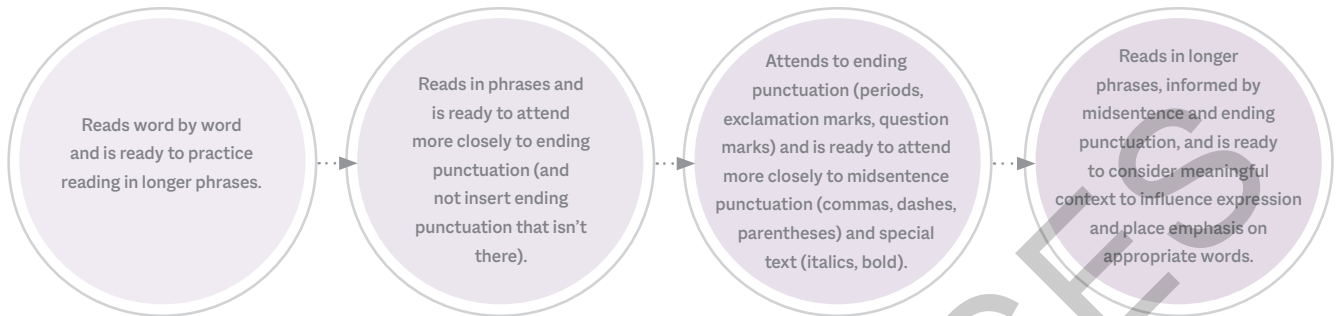
③ **CHECK** does the word in this book mean the

↓ ↓  
“cognates”—there are hundreds + hundreds

**Hat Tips** are a quick thanks to another educator for the inspiration for the strategy.

**Visuals** are included for all lessons. Although most are examples of class or individual anchor charts, you may also see a tool such as a personalized strategy card or bookmark, student writing, or even photographs of students in action with the strategy.

expression and intonation. Then, as sentences become longer and authors use more midsentence punctuation (commas, em dashes, parentheses), they'll need to attend to this punctuation in order to achieve prosody.



Skill progressions will help you match what you notice from the assessments you give your students to specific strategies your students need to progress.

On the left of each chapter's progression, you'll find a conclusion you can draw from observing or assessing a student.

On the right, you'll find suggested strategies to help the student grow.



### *A Progression of Skills: Engagement and Motivation*

| If a student . . .   | Then you might teach . . .   |
|--|--|
| <p>Needs support choosing texts that are of interest (and that they can read with comprehension, accuracy, and fluency).</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.1 Find Your Next Great Read</li> <li>2.2 Consider Aspects of Your Identity to Help You Choose</li> <li>2.3 Find Your Topic Territories</li> <li>2.4 Seek Out Recommendations from Readers You Trust</li> <li>2.5 Read a Review to Help You Choose</li> <li>2.6 Sample the Book, Then Decide</li> <li>2.7 Check the Book's Readability</li> <li>2.8 If It's Not Working, Let It Go</li> </ul>  |
| <p>Chooses appropriate texts and is ready to start identifying a purpose or making a plan for reading time.</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.9 Read with a Purpose in Mind</li> <li>2.10 Make Reading Resolutions</li> <li>2.11 Plan Goal-Focused Stopping Places</li> <li>2.12 Prepare to Purposefully Pause</li> <li>2.13 Plan Ahead for Unexpected Reading Moments</li> </ul>   |
| <p>Can sustain reading for a short period of time and is ready to improve attentional focus to increase stamina, and to monitor for meaning and fix-up and reengage as needed.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.14 Choose Your Reading Environment</li> <li>2.15 Vary the Length, Type, or Difficulty of Texts</li> <li>2.16 Look Ahead, Take Breaks</li> <li>2.17 Consider Mind over Matter</li> <li>2.18 Retell and Jump Back In</li> <li>2.19 Reread and Jump Back In</li> <li>2.20 Restart Your Reading</li> <li>2.21 Prime Yourself with Prior Knowledge</li> <li>2.22 Fix the Fuzziness</li> <li>2.23 Get Focused with Questions Before You Read</li> <li>2.24 Ask Questions as You Read</li> <li>2.25 Visualize to Focus</li> <li>2.26 Monitor and Adjust Your Pace</li> </ul> |

## 11.15 Use a Reference

**Strategy** If you can't figure out a word in the way of your understanding, find a reference within or outside of the book to see how the word is being used in the context. Explain what the word means and how it is being used.

**Lesson Language** *When you've found a word and you still can't figure out the word, you may choose to look it up. You don't want to interrupt your reading on every page to run to a reference, but if you find that not knowing the word interferes with understanding what you're reading, or if you are just really curious about what the word might mean, you may choose to find a definition. Whether you use an online dictionary, a printed dictionary, or a glossary within the text, the important thing to remember is that a simple definition is rarely enough to really help you understand the word. Always think about the context in which the word appears to make sure you're choosing the right definition (as we know many words have multiple meanings!).*

**Teaching Tip** As standard dictionaries assume a fluent, adult audience, be sure to have children's dictionaries available, physically or online, for younger learners. For quick access with older learners, let them know they can type *define* plus any word into Google, which displays definition(s) from the Oxford Dictionary, plus other useful information, like audio pronunciations and synonyms. You might also consider various browser extensions, such as Google Dictionary, which can display the definition of any word encountered online with a simple click. These and similar tools are helpful for young English language learners.

**Lesson Language** is included with some of the lessons to show how I might explain or demonstrate a strategy to an individual, small group, or whole class. You don't always need to explain or demonstrate; some children will be able to get to work after only hearing the strategy. Adapt any and all language to make it your own: match what you say to the age and experiences of the readers you're teaching; use the books I chose, or use ones you know and love.

**Teaching Tips** are small bits of advice—about text types to use, modifications to consider, extensions to try, background knowledge, and so on—for teachers to keep in mind when planning.

**Skill Progression Callout** in the margin reminds you when and for which readers this strategy might be most helpful, and the highlighted dots remind you of the stage of the progression.

### Skills

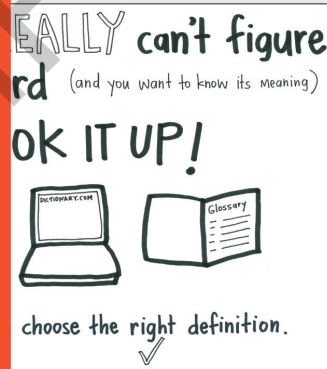
- building knowledge
- self-monitoring
- synthesizing

### Progression

Is confidently and independently using a variety of strategies to figure out unfamiliar words and is to supplement word learning outside resources.



**Research Links** offer empirical support for the strategy. In most cases, the link offers direct support for the strategy, other times for the skill, and occasionally a bit of related information that will be helpful to know when teaching the strategy.



### Research Link

In a study using eye-tracking technology, researchers found that readers whose second language was English relied on dictionary use even when an unknown word was irrelevant and the meaning could be easily inferred (Prichard & Atkins, 2021). This underscores the importance of helping readers to consider when it's worth pausing their reading to turn to a resource.



## *A Progression of Skills: Emergent Literacy and Language Development*

### **If a student . . .**

Needs support to develop book awareness, print concepts, and genre awareness.

In a story, alone or with a teacher/partner, labels and elaborates briefly on what's in pictures. Is ready to start elaborating with story language, including dialogue.

In an informational text, alone or with a teacher/partner, labels and elaborates briefly on what's in pictures. Is ready to start elaborating with more content-specific language or more detailed information.

Is elaborating well on each individual page and is ready to start synthesizing pages, either alone or with a teacher/partner.

Is paying attention to the print in books and is ready to develop letter-sound knowledge.

### **Then you might teach . . .**

- 1.1 **Go Left to Right, Top to Bottom**
- 1.2 **Find the Parts (with a Partner)**
- 1.3 **Pause, Look Around the Page, Think**
- 1.4 **Notice the Type of Book to Decide How to Read It**
- 1.5 **Notice, Think, Explain**
- 1.6 **Sound Like a Storyteller**
- 1.7 **Express the Emotions**
- 1.8 **Act It Out to Storytell It**
- 1.9 **Talk Like an Expert**
- 1.10 **Say a Few Details**
- 1.11 **Pay Attention to the WHOLE and Teeny-Tiny Details**
- 1.12 **Connect Pages Like a Storyteller**
- 1.13 **Back Up, Revise**
- 1.14 **Connect the Information**
- 1.15 **Match Letters as You Sing**
- 1.16 **Connect Letters in the Book to Letters in the World**
- 1.17 **Trace and Compare the Letters (Uppercase Versus Lowercase)**
- 1.18 **Match Letters and Sounds**

# Take the Word Apart, Then Put It Back Together: Syllables

## Skills

- decoding
- blending

## Progression

Is ready to decode longer, multisyllabic words by recognizing and correctly pronouncing words with more complex letter strings and apply knowledge of syllable type and morphemes, blending parts together. May also be working to refine pronunciations by figuring out what part of the word to stress.



## Hat Tip

*A Fresh Look at Phonics: Common Causes of Failure and 7 Ingredients for Success* (Blevins, 2016)

## Research Link

There are three overarching skills relating to decoding multisyllabic words: analysis, pronunciation, and synthesis (Beck & Beck, 2013). Analysis is knowing *where* to divide words. Children know how to break a word apart into syllables based on what they know about morphology and/or what they've learned about syllable types (Bhattacharya, 2006; Bhattacharya & Ehri, 2004; Knight-McKenna, 2008).

**Strategy** Find the syllable breaks to read a longer word syllable by syllable. Remember there is at least one vowel in every syllable (see chart), so start by underlining (or finding) each vowel. Break the word apart keeping at least one vowel in each syllable. Pronounce each syllable. Blend them together.

## Prompts

- You read that syllable by syllable—and it worked!
- Remember the syllable spelling patterns you know.
- Each syllable has at least one vowel. Where do you think the first break is?
- Make sure to keep blends and digraphs together within a syllable.

Syllables can help you figure out words

Here are some reminders:

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <p>V C C V</p> <p>doctor</p> <p>Divide between 2 middle consonants</p>  | <p>V C V</p> <p>visit</p> <p>If the 1st vowel is short, divide after the consonant</p>   | <p>V C V</p> <p>paper</p> <p>If the 1st vowel is long, divide before the consonant</p>        |
| <p>C · LE</p> <p>turtle</p> <p>Divide before the consonant -le</p>      | <p>V C C C V</p> <p>extra</p> <p>With 3 consonants usually split after 1st consonant</p> | <p>V C C C C V</p> <p>instruct</p> <p>With 4 consonants usually split after 1st consonant</p> |
| (But keep digraphs and blends together!)                                |  |   |
| <p>sunshine</p> <p>For a compound word divide between the two words</p> | <p>V V</p> <p>lion</p> <p>Divide between two vowels if they aren't a pair</p>            | <p>unhappily</p> <p>Divide after a prefix and before a suffix</p>                             |



## A Progression of Skills: Fluency

### If a student ...

Needs general support with fluency at any developmental level.

Reads word by word and is ready to practice reading in longer phrases.

Reads in phrases and is ready to attend more closely to ending punctuation (and not insert ending punctuation that isn't there).

Attends to ending punctuation (periods, exclamation marks, question marks) and is ready to attend more closely to midsentence punctuation (commas, dashes, parentheses) and special text (italics, bold).

Reads in longer phrases, informed by midsentence and ending punctuation and is ready to consider meaningful context to influence expression and place emphasis on appropriate words.

### Then you might teach ...

- 4.1 Reread for Fluency
- 4.2 Warm Up and Transfer
- 4.3 Coach Your Partner's Fluency
- 4.4 Act It Out to Smooth It Out
- 4.5 Listen to Yourself, Catch the Choppiness, Reread
- 4.6 Find a Good Pace: Fluent, Not Fast
- 4.7 Read in Your Head Like You Read Aloud
- 4.8 Scoop Up Words to Read in Phrases
- 4.9 Warm Up with Phrases
- 4.10 Read to the End of the Line
- 4.11 Drum the Poem to Find the Rhythm
- 4.12 Mind the Ending Punctuation
- 4.13 Snap to the Next Line
- 4.14 Let the Commas Be Your Guide
- 4.15 Attend to Extra Information: Parentheses and Em Dashes
- 4.16 Read with Emphasis: Bold, Italics, Underline, All Caps
- 4.17 Read with Emphasis: Infer from Context
- 4.18 Use a "This Is Interesting" Voice
- 4.19 Use a Character's Voice for the Words Inside Quotation Marks
- 4.20 Read It How the Author Tells You (Tags)
- 4.21 Make Your Voice Match the Feeling
- 4.22 Make Your Voice Match the Meaning and Genre
- 4.23 Be Your Own Director with Plays and Scripts
- 4.24 Find the Pauses in Poetry
- 4.25 Let the Rhyme Be Your Guide

## 4.4 Act It Out to Smooth It Out

### Skills

- self-monitoring
- phrasing
- expression
- emphasis

### Progression

Needs general support with fluency at any developmental level.



### Research Link

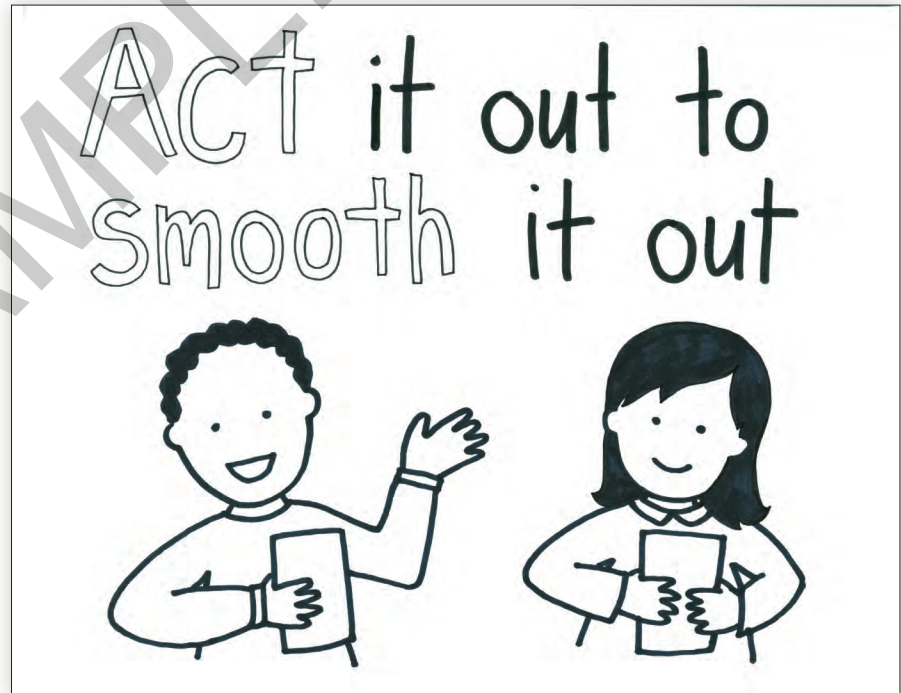
Multiple studies have shown that instructional strategies that encourage reading as performance (for example, reader's theater) have a positive impact on students' reading fluency, combining authentic, repeated readings with an emphasis on meaningful expression (Corcoran & Davis, 2005; Mraz et al., 2013; Young & Rasinski, 2018; Young, Valadez, & Gandara, 2016).

**Strategy** Choose a book (or a play or script) to read with your partner that has two characters in conversation. Decide who will take on each role. Read your part using all you know about smooth and expressive reading, so you sound and act like the characters you're portraying. Reread to rehearse and improve your performance, just as actors do!

**Teaching Tip** Books in Mo Willems' Elephant and Piggie series are great choices for practicing this strategy. The books focus mostly on two characters, and most of the text is dialogue captured in speech bubbles. Because early chapter books like Saadia Faruqi's Yasmin series often have scenes of dialogue involving small numbers of characters, they are also good choices for practice. If you don't already have baskets of plays and scripts in your classroom library, consider creating one! There are many sites online with scripts to print for free, including those on Tim Rasinski's website ([www.timrasinski.com](http://www.timrasinski.com)). For a more advanced strategy leaning on the reader's theater research, see Strategy 4.23.

### Prompts

- Read it again to practice.
- Use your voice to show how the character would say that.
- Now that you've acted it out once, think about what might change the next time you act it out together.
- You sounded just like the character!



## 4.17 Read with Emphasis: Infer from Context

**Strategy** If there is no special text treatment to tell you which word(s) in a sentence to emphasize, think about the context. Does it suggest emphasis? If it does, think about how where you place emphasis impacts the meaning. If your inferred emphasis doesn't match the meaning, reread emphasizing a different word (or words).

**Lesson Language** *The word or words you do or don't emphasize can impact the meaning of a sentence. For example, consider a short sentence like "This is my house." Depending on how you read it, it can mean different things.*

*"This is my house." (A simple declarative statement with no emphasis)*

*"**This** is my house." (It's this one, not that one)*

*"This is **my** house." (It's mine, not yours or someone else's)*

*"This is my **house**." (I'm not talking about any other place)*

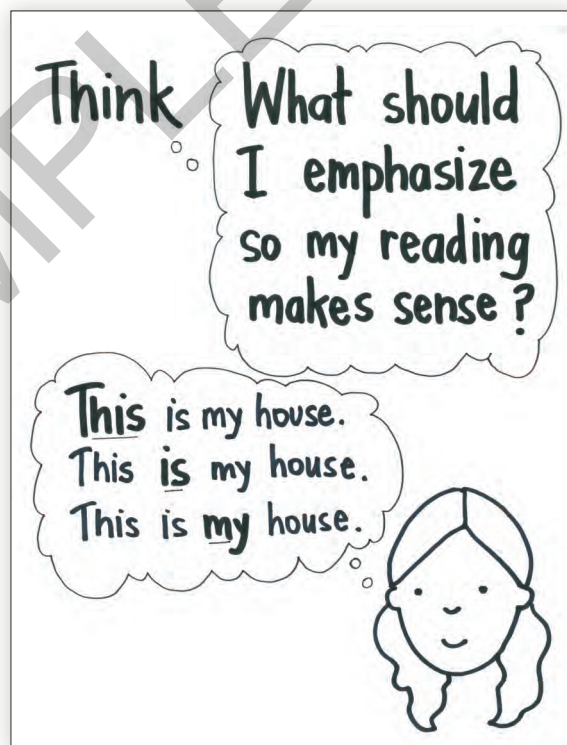
*Sometimes, based on context, it makes sense to emphasize a word even if there is no special text treatment to guide you. How do you know when you need to add emphasis? You look for the meaning to suggest it. For example, if you found this sentence in this context:*

As we walked down the street, I told my new best friend that I couldn't wait until I could show her my room. "This is it! This is my house."

*How would you read it? Would you add emphasis? If so, on which word? If the way you read it the first time doesn't match what you're understanding in the text so far, try emphasizing a different word.*

### Prompts

- Do you think any words in this sentence need emphasis?
- When you emphasize that word in the sentence, how does it impact the meaning?
- Based on the context, which word should you emphasize in this sentence?
- When you stress that word, it means \_\_. Do you think that fits with the context?



### Skills

- expression
- emphasis
- self-monitoring
- inferring

### Progression

Reads in longer phrases, informed by midsentence and ending punctuation and is ready to consider meaningful context to influence expression and place emphasis on appropriate words.



### Research Link

As a number of scholars have highlighted, written text does not contain many prosodic cues, so readers need to rely on context and comprehension to decide on appropriate pitch, stress, emphasis, and pauses (Miller & Schwanenflugel, 2008; Schreiber, 1991).



## *A Progression of Skills: Comprehending Theme*

### **If a student . . .**

Can understand a story on a literal level using book-specific language and is ready to infer a lesson, often from a moment in the book, or understand morals (as in fables) that are explicitly stated.

Is ready to understand theme as a concept inferred from synthesizing details across a section or the whole text and then articulated as a single word or phrase (e.g., friendships, love, fitting in).

Is able to infer theme(s) as a single word or phrase and is ready to elaborate or provide commentary to articulate theme(s) as statements, and infer multiple themes based on different plotlines, perspectives, and so on.

Is ready to identify symbols and motifs that connect to theme(s) and use prior knowledge to interpret their meaning(s).

Can identify theme(s), and is ready to analyze thematic elements within one text and/or across texts.

### **Then you might teach . . .**

- 7.1 **Think About the Moral of the Story**
- 7.2 **Give Advice to the Character**
- 7.3 **Look Up to Characters**
- 7.4 **Learn from Character Changes**
- 7.5 **Notice How Characters Respond**
- 7.6 **Pay Attention to “Aha Moments”**
- 7.7 **Notice When Wise Characters Teach**
- 7.8 **Connect Texts to Texts to Find Lessons**
- 7.9 **Find Different Lessons Within a Series**
- 7.10 **Find Theme Hints in Blurbs**
- 7.11 **Label a Theme (as a Concept/Idea)**
- 7.12 **Distinguish Between Plot Events and Theme(s)**
- 7.13 **Find a Story’s Theme(s) by Focusing on Character**
- 7.14 **Find Theme Hints in Titles**
- 7.15 **Identify Social Issues**
- 7.16 **Say More About a Theme**
- 7.17 **Say More About Social Issues, and Take Action**
- 7.18 **Consider Last Words**
- 7.19 **Find Different Themes in Different Plotlines**
- 7.20 **Consider Characters’ Identities for Different Perspectives on Themes**
- 7.21 **React to What’s Unfair**
- 7.22 **Recognize Objects as Symbols**
- 7.23 **Draw from Your Symbol Bank**
- 7.24 **Look for Symbolism in Setting**
- 7.25 **Analyze the Development of Theme**
- 7.26 **Connect Texts to Analyze Theme**
- 7.27 **Analyze Satire**

## 7.11 Label a Theme (as a Concept/Idea)

**Strategy** Think back to the events of the story you've read so far, quickly summarizing or stating the gist of the events. Then, think, "What's a word or short phrase that captures a theme (as a concept/idea) this story explores?" Use the list of common themes to help.

**Lesson Language** *One way to think of theme is as a concept, or idea, about life or people that the story explores. Themes can help us label and organize our thinking, like sorting similar objects into buckets. They help us think about the so what of any one book and also make connections between books (for example, both of these books are about friendship). A few common themes show up again and again in books, and as a starting place, you could consider if any of those themes are explored in the text you're reading.*

**Teaching Tip** A quick Google search for "common themes in literature" will yield lots of possibilities like the ones you see on this chart. Include ones you think your students are most likely to understand and find in the books they are reading. If you introduce them individually and with examples, students will be more likely to see them in other texts.


### Prompts

- Say the gist of the story. Now say, "So what about it?"
- Check the list of common themes. Think about whether any of those relate to the story.
- Yes, a story can have more than one theme.
- Think, "What's a word or phrase that names something this story is really about?"

### COMMON THEMES *in literature*

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Theme:</b><br>A big topic about life or people that the story explores. | <b>Think</b><br>"What's a word or phrase that captures the topic the story explores?" |
|--|---|

- good vs. evil
- love
- redemption
- courage + perseverance
- coming of age
- war
- environment + climate change
- revenge
- power
- loneliness
- friendship
- free will vs. fate
- hope



environment + climate change →      ← Any others?

### Skills

- inferring
- determining importance
- synthesizing

### Progression

Is ready to understand theme as a concept inferred from synthesizing details across a section or the whole text and then articulated as a single word or phrase (e.g., friendships, love, fitting in).



### Research Link

Work by Lehr (1988, 1991) indicates that students as young as five and six are able to identify and match stories by theme (e.g., friendship, courage), before they are able to name the theme itself. The ability to verbalize the similarities between stories improves with age, particularly with wide exposure to literature.

## 7.26 Connect Texts to Analyze Theme

### Skills

- synthesizing
- analyzing

### Progression

Can identify theme(s), and is ready to analyze thematic elements within one text and/or across texts.



### Research Link

In a review of research on “multiple source use” when analyzing literature, Bloome and colleagues (2018) highlight that readers must construct accurate mental models of both stories to make comparisons between them. They found that using multiple texts may improve a student’s understanding of each text.

**Strategy** Identify two books that have a similar theme. Ask yourself, “How does the theme develop in similar ways in each book? How does it develop differently?”

**Teaching Tip** See Strategy 7.8 in this chapter for a way for children to connect stories with similar lessons and Strategy 7.25 to help students to analyze theme in a single story. This strategy is more sophisticated as it asks readers to do both: compare *and* analyze. For example, you might compare themes in *New Kid* (Craft, 2019) and *Merci Suárez Changes Gears* (Medina, 2018). In both books, the main characters (Jordan and Merci) struggle in a school environment that feels culturally different from their home and community, they must navigate between two worlds, and they work to stay true to themselves. However, Jordan’s challenges have more to do with race, whereas Merci’s are more about class. You might also consider how each character’s home environment and families help or hinder them as they navigate two worlds. This comparative analysis allows readers to articulate unique ideas more precisely from each text and consider author’s craft in the development of the themes.

### Prompts

- What other books does this one remind you of? Why?
- What are a few themes in this book? What book(s) also explore one of those themes?
- Compare how the authors of each book explore this theme in ways that are unique.
- Remember, when you analyze a theme’s development you’re breaking it into parts—chronologically, or by story element, for example.

**Connect Texts to Analyze Theme**

*New Kid* by Jerry Craft

*Merci Suarez Changes Gears* by Meg Medina

**Theme:** Navigating life between two worlds and working to stay true to self.

**Now your turn...**

- Think about two books you've read with a similar theme.
- Compare the theme in each book:
  - Any similarities?
  - Any differences?
- How did the author of each book develop the theme across the story?



## *A Progression of Skills: Comprehending Topics and Main Ideas*

### If a student . . .

Names topics and is ready to start identifying a text's subtopics.

Is able to identify topic(s) and subtopic(s) and is ready to articulate a simple main idea that's stated explicitly in the text.

Is able to recognize a main idea when stated explicitly in the text and is ready to begin synthesizing information to state a main idea in original language or to infer a main idea.

Is able to synthesize information to state or infer a main idea and is ready to consider structure to determine multiple main ideas or a main idea with complexity.

Is able to identify complex main ideas and is ready to read critically to analyze an author's craft, authority, or bias, or compare and contrast main ideas from different books on the same topic(s).

### Then you might teach . . .

**8.1 Identify Subtopics**

**8.2 Notice What Repeats**

**8.3 Look for Main Ideas in the Introduction**

**8.4 Look for Main Ideas in the Conclusion**

**8.5 Clue In to Key Sentences**

**8.6 Name the *What* and *So What***

**8.7 Ask Questions, Form Main Ideas**

**8.8 Survey the Text**

**8.9 Paraphrase Each Chunk, Then Put the Pieces Together**

**8.10 Sketch Each Chunk, Then Put the Pieces Together**

**8.11 Add Up Details to Determine Main Idea**

**8.12 Shrink-a-Text**

**8.13 Consider Structure to Find Main Idea(s)**

**8.14 Consider Structure: Problem/Solution**

**8.15 Consider Structure: Cause and Effect**

**8.16 Consider Structure: Compare and Contrast**

**8.17 Consider Shifting Structures**

**8.18 Notice the *What* and the *How* of Information**

**8.19 Research and Recognize the Author's Authority and Bias**

**8.20 Compare and Combine Main Ideas Across Texts**



## *A Progression of Skills: Comprehending Vocabulary and Figurative Language*

### **If a student . . .**

Skips over or ignores unfamiliar words and needs support to self-monitor and approach word learning with consciousness and curiosity.

Is aware when a word is unfamiliar and is ready to learn to infer a gist or definition from prior knowledge and/or sentence-level context.

Is able to use context and prior knowledge to infer and is ready to learn to analyze word parts and apply a knowledge of grammar, morphology, and/or etymology.

Is confidently and independently using a variety of strategies to figure out unfamiliar words and is ready to supplement word learning using outside resources.

Is able to understand and/or figure out the meanings of words and is ready to consider words within a larger context and analyze an author's word choice for a deeper understanding and interpretation.

### **Then you might teach . . .**

**11.1 Be Word Conscious and Curious**

**11.2 Say It Out Loud**

**11.3 Monitor for Sound-Alikes**

**11.4 Mine Your Memory**

**11.5 Insert a Synonym**

**11.6 Use Part of Speech as a Clue**

**11.7 Consider Topic-Specific Meanings**

**11.8 Look to See If It's Right There in the Sentence!**

**11.9 Consider Sentence Structure**

**11.10 Consider Cohesion and Conjunctions**

**11.11 Use Individual Words to Figure Out Compound Words**

**11.12 Look for Word Part Clues: Prefixes and Suffixes**

**11.13 Look for Word Part Clues: Roots and Bases**

**11.14 Get Help from Cognates**

**11.15 Use a Reference and Explain It**

**11.16 Look It Up Within an E-Book**

**11.17 Phone a Friend**

**11.18 Read Up a Ladder**

**11.19 Listen or Watch to Learn**

**11.20 Use Mood as a Clue to Meaning**

**11.21 Stick to Your Story**

**11.22 Consider the Type of Figurative Language**

**11.23 Picture It**

**11.24 Be Alert to Word Choice**

## 11.7 Consider Topic-Specific Meanings

**Strategy** When you come to a word you know, but it isn't making sense, it may be because it's being used in a topic-specific way that's new to you. Think about the topic you're reading about and the specific context where the word is used, and see if that helps you figure out how the familiar word is being used in a different way.

**Lesson Language** *You know that the same word can do different jobs in a sentence and that this changes the meaning of the word—you can dress yourself for school or wear a dress to a party. But sometimes a word means something completely different even when it's doing the same job in a sentence because it has a different topic-specific meaning. For example:*

- A trunk if you're reading about trees and a trunk if you're reading about luggage (not to mention a trunk if you are reading about elephants!)
- Running if you're reading about a car's motor and running if you're reading about sports
- Blue if it describes the color of your walls and blue if it describes the way you're feeling


*Other times, a word's most basic meaning is the same, but the topic-specific meaning can be very different.*

- A shuttle that carries astronauts is different than a shuttle to the rental cars at the airport. They both move people, but one's a spaceship and the other is a bus.
- A plate in your kitchen is different than a plate in the earth's crust. They're both flat, but one's a round piece of paper, plastic, or ceramic small enough to hold, the other is a piece of the outer layer of the earth so big that it can fit an entire continent.
- An adaptation in biology is different than an adaptation in theater. They're both changes, but one is a new structure or feature that has evolved in a living thing and the other is a new movie or a play based on a book.

### Prompts

- What meanings do you know for that word? Think of the topic you're reading about.
- How do you know it can't be that meaning in *this* context?
- What's another meaning that might make sense here?
- That's one meaning of the word, but does that make sense here?

Think about the **TOPIC** you're reading!



**YOU KNOW:**

- The same word can do different jobs in a sentence & this changes its meaning.
- A word can mean something different when doing the same job.
- A word's basic meaning is the same, but the topic meaning is different.

### Skills

- activating prior knowledge
- self-monitoring
- inferring

### Progression

Is aware when a word is unfamiliar and is ready to learn to infer a gist or definition from prior knowledge and/or sentence-level context.



### Research Link

In a series of experiments, Klein and Murphy (2001) explored *polysemous words* (those with different, but related, meanings [e.g., *paper, film, copy*]) and *homonyms* (words with the same spelling but no related meaning [e.g., *bank, right, tire*]) and found evidence that these words are stored separately in memory. Readers can quickly access meaning if the word is used in a familiar sense, but comprehension is slowed when the word is used in an unfamiliar way.

## 11.9 Consider Sentence Structure

**Strategy** Sometimes the way a sentence is structured can help you figure out what an unfamiliar word means. First, identify the sentence structure. Then, ask yourself, “Does this mean these things are alike? Are they opposites? Does one cause the other?” Infer the meaning based on the relationship.

**Lesson Language** *I’m going to share a few sentences and think aloud about how I notice the way the information in the sentence fits together and how that helps me think about what a word might mean. It doesn’t always get me to an exact definition, but it gets me a sense of the word so that my overall comprehension isn’t interrupted.*

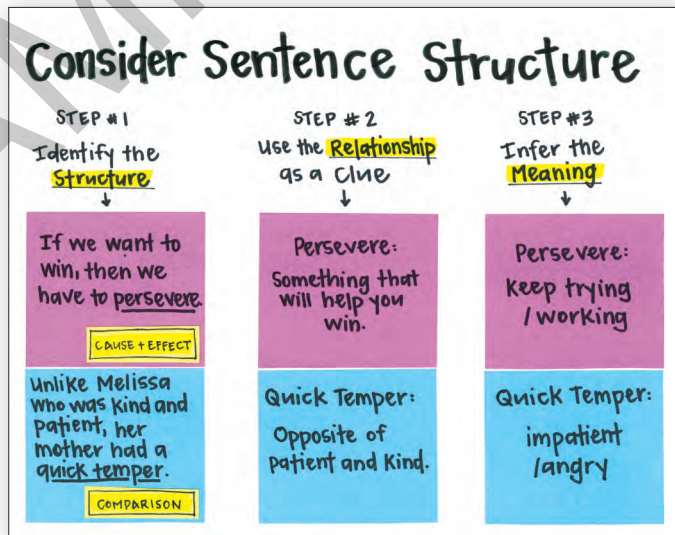
*“Unlike Melissa who was patient and kind, her mother had a quick temper.” In this sentence, Melissa and her mother are being compared. I understand what patient and kind mean, so “a quick temper” must mean the opposite of that since it says unlike.*

*“If we want to win, then we have to persevere.” This is an if-then or cause-effect sentence. So persevere means something that you have to do to win. Work hard? Keep going?*

*“Being in the mountains made her feel a sense of relaxation and tranquility, as if she didn’t have a care in the world.” The second part of the sentence gives more information. Relaxed goes with not having a care. So tranquility must mean something similar to relaxation.*

### Prompts

- Pause to figure out how the words in the sentence work together. What’s the relationship between the information?
- How would you describe the relationship between the information in the first part and the second part?
- Now that you paid attention to structure, can you figure out what this word might mean?



### Skills

- analyzing
- inferring

### Progression

Is aware when a word is unfamiliar and is ready to learn to infer a gist or definition from prior knowledge and/or sentence-level context.



### Research Link

According to research summarized by Kintsch and Mangalath (2011), word meanings are not stored ready-made in our memories—they only take on meaning in the interaction with their context. Consequently, meaning is constructed for a word every time that word is encountered. Signal words for different text structures can help strengthen networks of meanings among words, allowing for easier mental access the next time those words are encountered (Ericsson & Kintsch, 1995).