

Comprehension

Comprehension is acquiring meaning from the text. Vocabulary is the first step in comprehension; according to Ehri's (2002) model of word-reading development, text-reading fluency is a direct outcome of word-reading fluency, which in turn is the outcome of word-reading accuracy.

Featured on curriculum

From reception and throughout school in most literacy-based subjects.

When to raise a concern

Comprehension will be a challenge if the learner has not mastered decoding, as the effort of reading will be going elsewhere.

Comprehension is crucial from year 5 and above, but will be explored both verbally and through text from year 1.

What to do

Explicit instruction in comprehension strategies can support young learners to engage with and understand text. However, reading comprehension strategies alone cannot compensate for lack of vocabulary or content knowledge.

Developing a rich vocabulary also improves comprehension. Reading a variety of texts about the same subject supports comprehension. Using effective questioning of the learner's understanding of the text also makes sure all their concentration is not only being used on decoding.

How to assess

When reading with a learner, monitor their grasp of the story by asking them questions about characters, main events and the sequence of events.

If there are real difficulties with comprehension and their progress is not in line with their peers after KS1, it might be worth discussing the next steps with your SENCo.

There are standardised assessments of comprehension - a good place to look for reliable assessments is the SASC website: www.sasc.org.uk