

Fix Up Strategies

(How can I help a child who is struggling)

Make a Connection

Good readers know that using knowledge to make a connection will help them better understand their reading. They use memories, personal experiences, information about the subject, the author's style, and textual organization to help them visualize, predict, ask questions, infer, stay focused, and remember what they have read.

Text connections can give a reader insights into a character's motive. Sometimes recalling factual information helps the reader understand why an event is taking place. Remembering another story with a similar plot enables the reader to anticipate action. Identifying an author's writing style helps the reader understand what the author is saying.

Make a Prediction

Good readers anticipate what's coming next. By thinking about other things they've read, readers expect certain new events to occur. When an event doesn't match a prediction, readers rethink and revise their thinking. Sometimes misreading words throws the prediction off. When readers predict, they are aware meaning is breaking down. Instead of ignoring an incorrect prediction, they get back into the action by making a new guess. Predicting keeps readers on track. It keeps them involved so they aren't surprised by incorrect conclusions.

Stop and Think About What You Have Already Read

This one is so easy most students ignore it. Yet it is one of the most useful fix-up strategies of all. Good readers ponder what they have read. They connect newly acquired knowledge with information they already have. Stopping and thinking gives readers time to synthesize new information. It allows them to ask questions, visualize, and determine what is important in the text.

Ask a Question

Good readers ask themselves questions when they read. Curious about the answers, they continue reading. Sometimes these questions are answered directly in the text, and meaning is clarified. Typically, clarifying questions are about character, setting, event, or process: who, what, when, and where. Other times, answers to readers' questions aren't found in the text. These are pondering questions that don't always have simple answers. They ask how and why. In these cases, the reader is forced to go beyond the words to find the answer, either by drawing an inference or by going to another source. Readers who ask questions and know where the answers to their questions are to be found are more likely to have a richer read, to infer, to draw conclusions, and regain control of their reading.

Reflect in Writing

Writing down what they think about what they've read allows readers to clarify their thinking. It is an opportunity to reflect. Readers better understand their reading when they have written about it. The writing may be a summary or a response. Sometimes just jotting down a few notes will clarify meaning.

Visualize

When meaning breaks down, good readers consciously create images in their head to help them make sense of what the words are saying. They use movies, television, and life to help them picture what is happening. When a reader can visualize what is happening, comprehension improves. Encourage your students to make a video in their head. If they can "see it", they often understand it.

Use Print Conventions

Key words, bold print, italicized words, capital letters, and punctuation are all used to enhance understanding. Conventions of print help the author convey intent. They help the reader determine what is important and what the author values. Conventions of print give the reader insight into voice inflections and how the author wants the piece to sound. Poor readers often ignore conventions because they are unaware of their functions. Pointing out conventions will not only improve reading comprehension but also help students use these same conventions to convey meaning when they write.

Retell What You've Read

Taking a moment to retell what has been read helps the reader reflect. It activates background knowledge and also provides a check on whether the reader is understanding. When readers can't retell what they read, it is an indication that their mind has wandered and confusion has set in.

Reread

Since this is the one strategy that most readers know automatically, it needs little explaining. An important aspect to remember is that a student doesn't have to reread everything for the strategy to be helpful. Sometimes rereading a portion of the text – a sentence, or even just a word – can enhance comprehension. Struggling readers tend to think that rereading means they have reread everything.

Notice Patterns in Text Structure

Genres have specific organizational patterns. Recognizing how a piece is organized helps readers locate information more quickly. Some struggling readers believe that they have to read everything from cover to cover, even nonfiction. Taking time to explain how a piece is organized helps students figure out where information is found. It helps them determine what is important. When meaning breaks down, readers can stop and think how the text is organized and see whether there is something in the organizational pattern that will help them understand the piece.

Adjust Your Reading Rate

Good readers don't read everything fast. They adjust their rate to meet the demands of the task. Many students try to read textbooks at the same rate that they read their favorite magazine. Good readers slow down when something is difficult or unfamiliar. They realize that in order to construct meaning, their rate must decrease. They also know that it's okay to read faster when something is familiar or boring. Reading faster sometimes forces the brain to stay engaged. Good readers select a rate based on the difficulty of the material, their purpose in reading it, and their familiarity with the topic

Not all fix-up strategies will work all the time. Some work better than others depending on the nature of the confusion. It is important that students know that when good readers get stuck, they don't quit! They stop and decide how to repair their confusion.

The more plans readers have for reconstructing comprehension, the more likely they are to stick with their reading.

Taken from *I Read It, But I Don't Get It* by Cris Tovani