

This student page includes a short passage focusing on three of these essential comprehension skills.

Comprehension Skills At-a-Glance

Use the information that follows to introduce the reading comprehension skills covered in this lesson.

Main Idea & Details

Understanding the main or key idea of a paragraph is crucial for a reader. The main idea is what the paragraph is about. The other parts of the paragraph help to explain more about this key idea. The main idea is sometimes in the first or last sentence of a paragraph. Students should be aware that some main ideas are stated explicitly and others are implicit requiring readers to put together details to determine the main idea.

The information that supports the main idea is usually referred to as the details. Details—facts, examples, definitions, etc.—help a reader gain a fuller understanding of a paragraph.

Summarize

Readers should be able to use main ideas to summarize a text. By summarizing, students are better able to recall important points. This is an important skill for taking notes and studying for exams.

Context Clues

Using context means determining an unfamiliar word's meaning by studying the phrases, sentences, and overall text with which the word appears. Context clues help readers comprehend and enjoy a text and also read more smoothly and efficiently.

Figurative Language

Beyond using context clues to derive meaning is the ability to differentiate between literal and figurative language. Readers who can recognize figures of speech and determine their meanings are well on their way to fluency.

Draw Conclusions

After thinking about information in a text, a reader makes a decision or conclusion by examining evidence rooted in the text. Explain that writers don't always state all of their ideas, so readers have to look for clues to understand what is meant.

Point of View

While distinguishing fact from opinion is one step in the reading process, it is important for students to go farther. They should be able to sort facts, opinions, and feelings to help determine a writer's point of view and compare it to what they themselves think. Explain that good readers consult several sources on subjects of interest to gain different points of view.

Inference

Although some students don't know what an inference is, many are most likely making inferences—both in their daily lives and when reading—without being aware of it. Students should understand that writers don't include every detail in their writing; it is up to readers to supply some information. A reader makes a guess or inference by putting together what is in a text with what he or she already knows. Inferring makes a significant difference in how much a reader gains from a text.

Fact & Opinion

Readers who can identify and differentiate between statements of fact and opinion are better able to analyze and assess a text. Students should learn to recognize phrases such as *I think* and *you should*, that signal opinions.

Answers:

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1. A
2. A. Fact
B. Fact
C. Opinion
3. C
4. C