

On average, reading comprehension approaches deliver an additional six months' progress

Cost	Evidence strength	Impact (months)	Effect size
£££££		+6	0.45

What is it?

Reading comprehension strategies focus on the learners' understanding of written text. Pupils are taught a range of techniques which enable them to comprehend the meaning of what they read. These can include: inferring meaning from context; summarising or identifying key points; using graphic or semantic organisers; developing questioning strategies; and monitoring their own comprehension and identifying difficulties themselves (see also [Metacognition and self-regulation](#)).

How effective is it?

On average, reading comprehension approaches deliver an additional six months' progress. Successful reading comprehension approaches allow activities to be carefully tailored to pupils' reading capabilities, and involve activities and texts that provide an effective, but not overwhelming, challenge.

Many of the approaches can be usefully combined with [Collaborative learning](#) techniques and [Phonics](#) to develop reading skills. The use of techniques such as graphic organisers and drawing pupils' attention to text features are likely to be particularly useful when reading expository or information texts.

There are some indications that computer-based tutoring approaches can be successful in improving reading comprehension (although the evidence is less robust in this area), particularly when they focus on the development of strategies and self-questioning skills.

Comparative findings indicate that, on average, reading comprehension approaches appear to be more effective than [Phonics](#) or [Oral language](#) approaches for upper primary and secondary pupils, for both short-term and long-term impact. However, supporting struggling readers is likely to

require a coordinated effort across the curriculum and a combination of approaches. No particular strategy should be seen as a panacea, and careful diagnosis of the reasons why an individual pupil is struggling should guide the choice of intervention strategies.

Studies in Arabic speaking countries have examined strategies to improve reading comprehension, including: explicitly teaching reading comprehension, collaborative strategic reading, metacognitive strategies, reading aloud in class, and the use of digital technology.

When tested in schools in Saudi Arabia and Jordan metacognitive strategies increased students' abilities to construct meaning from texts and challenged them to be critical and reflective thinkers. A study in Jordan found that the explicit teaching of reading comprehension strategies showed evidence of promise when teachers modeled the strategies for their students. Another intervention used a digital program designed to teach reading comprehension to pupils in Saudi Arabia, which improved not only their concept understanding but also their deductive and critical understanding. As a result, their higher order thinking skills developed.

There are, however, still gaps in the literature aimed at identifying the effective strategies and interventions that could develop students' reading comprehension in the Arab world.

How secure is the evidence?

There is extensive evidence in this area from a range of studies over the last 30 years. The majority of studies are from the USA and focus on pupils aged between 8 and 18 who are falling behind their peers or have difficulties with reading.

What are the costs?

The cost of the resources and professional training required to deliver reading comprehension strategies is estimated as very low. Evidence suggests that reading comprehension approaches need to be tailored to a pupil's current reading capabilities, so it is important that teachers receive professional development in effective diagnosis as well as training in the use of particular techniques and materials. The cost for an intervention with this type of training is estimated at about 1,200.0 GBP (1,543.7 USD, 1,094.5 JOD) per teacher or 48.0 GBP (61.7 USD, 43.8 JOD) per pupil.

Costs originally calculated in GBP; USD and JOD calculated via oanda.com on 22/09/20.

As yet there is no information about local costs.

What should I consider?

A key issue for teachers is identifying the level of difficulty for comprehension activities that is required to extend pupils' reading capabilities. How will you ensure the texts used provide an effective challenge?

Effective diagnosis of reading difficulties is important in identifying possible solutions, particularly for older struggling readers. Pupils can struggle with decoding the words, understanding the structure of the language used, or understanding particular vocabulary, which may be subject-specific. What techniques will you use to identify particular pupils' needs?

A wide range of strategies and approaches can be successful, but they need to be taught explicitly and consistently. How are you going to identify the strategies that will meet the needs of your pupils and how will these be reinforced?

How can you focus learners' attention on developing comprehension strategies that they can apply more widely?

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