

Reciprocal Teaching: Guidance for Schools

What is Reciprocal Teaching (RT)?

RT is an intervention to improve reading comprehension through interaction with educators involving the strategies of questioning, summarising, clarifying, and predicting text. The student gradually transitions to the educator role as they develop understanding of these strategies.

RT was developed in 1984 by Palincsar and Brown from related educational theories of the zone of proximal development, proleptic teacher, and expert scaffolding.

Why should schools use RT?

Research consistently demonstrates the substantial positive influence of RT on students' learning in the area of reading comprehension. Meta-analysis of studies on RT found a high effect size of 0.74. Studies conducted in multiple countries over the past 35 years have supported the effect of RT for use with varied learners, including age level achievers, students with learning or intellectual disabilities, English language learners, and students of different ages. Moreover, research has found that reading comprehension skills developed through RT are generalised across settings and academic subject areas, and maintained over time.

How do schools implement RT?

RT should be implemented with students with age appropriate word recognition and decoding skills, who demonstrate difficulty in reading comprehension.

1. The educator should first provide explicit instruction on the cognitive strategies to be used in this process before beginning the following steps involving modelling and practice of these strategies.
2. The student and educator should each read the passage silently.
3. **Questioning:** The educator should begin discussion by asking questions about the content of the passage and encourage the student to pose additional questions. Emphasise inferential rather than literal questions.
4. **Summarising:** The educator should offer a summary of 1 to 3 sentences and discuss it with the student to achieve consensus.
5. **Clarifying:** Clarify unclear or unfamiliar words and phrases. Re-read the text and refer to a dictionary when needed.
6. **Predicting:** The educator and student should each make predictions about the text, based on prior knowledge, clues in the text, or issues that the author

should address. The educator should explain the process of using clues to think about what may happen next.

7. Repeat steps 2 to 6 at different stages throughout the book or text. Each time this process is repeated, the educator's role in questioning, summarising, clarifying, and predicting should reduce and the student's role should in turn expand. Emphasis the cooperative effort of this process. As the student develops capability, increase expectations in terms of sophistication of questions and depth of text analysis.
8. Once the strategies of RT have been practiced with students individually, they could be reinforced and generalised through further individual work, cooperative group teaching, and peer tutoring.

Throughout this process, the educator should practice the method of scaffolded instruction by continuously identifying the competency level of the student, improving the student's confidence to learn, remaining as unobtrusive as possibly, and recognising when to alter direction to maintain the student's engagement.

Could we have further advice and support on RT?

The references below contain further information on RT, including several video demonstrations of this process. If you find that you require additional advice, support, or training, you may contact the Educational Psychology Service.

References

- Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. Abington, Oxon: Routledge.
- Mitchell, D. (2006). *What really works in special and inclusive education: Using evidence-based teaching strategies*. Routledge.
- Oczkus, L. (2018). *Reciprocal teaching at work: Powerful strategies and lessons for improving reading comprehension*. Third edition. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Palincsar, A. S., & Brown, A. (1984). Reciprocal teaching of comprehension-fostering and comprehension monitoring activities. *Cognition and Instruction*, 1(2), 117-175.

Video Demonstrations

[Readingrockets.org/strategies/reciprocal_teaching](https://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/reciprocal_teaching)
[youtube.com/watch?v=Jm4mSVXDCjE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jm4mSVXDCjE)
[youtube.com/watch?time_continue=287&v=SZnnxv4i4kA&feature=emb_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=287&v=SZnnxv4i4kA&feature=emb_logo)

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