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# Teaching Adults to Read: Comprehension

## Participant Handbook

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This presentation is made possible by funding by the National Institute for Literacy, Partnership for Reading.

The guide is also supported by funds from the National Institute for Literacy through CFDA 84.2567, LINCS Regional Resource Center Grant No. X257T060001.



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## Workshop Description

Comprehension: What is it? Why is it important (the research)? Who needs it (assessment results)? What kind of strategy Instruction? We'll explore the answers to these questions and use *Applying Research in Reading Instruction for Adults* to learn about and practice methods for teaching reading comprehension.

## Workshop Objectives

This workshop is designed to increase your awareness, knowledge, and use of research-based practices for adult reading assessment and instruction.

After completing the workshop, you will be able to:

- Name the findings and explain the implications of reading research for comprehension
- Use tools for assessing reading skills in comprehension
- Demonstrate effective strategies for teaching comprehension

## Agenda

Time	Topic
8:00 (20 min)	Overview
8:20 (10 min)	Research Related to Comprehension
8:30 (15 min)	Assessment in Comprehension
8:45 (60 min)	Strategy Instruction in Comprehensions
9:45 (15 min)	Next Steps and Closing

# What Is Reading

## Major Components or Aspects of Reading Instruction

### The Components of Reading

#### Print-Based Components

##### Alphabetic: Phonemic Awareness

Word Analysis  
(decoding;  
word recognition;  
structural analysis)

##### Fluency

#### Meaning-Based Components

##### Vocabulary

##### Comprehension

##### Skilled Reading

Fluent execution and  
coordination of word  
recognition and text  
comprehension.

**Alphabetic** is the whole process of using the letters in an alphabet to represent spoken words. It includes an awareness that words are made up of basic sounds (phonemes), and knowledge of the relationship between these basic sounds and the letters used to represent them (word analysis or phonics). Students demonstrate their phonemic awareness with tasks that require the manipulation of basic sounds in words, removing sounds from words for example (cat becomes at when the first sound is removed), or adding sounds (at becomes cat). Phonics instruction teaches individual letter-sound correspondences (the sounds made by the letters b, t, and oa, for example), and how individual letter-sound combinations are blended together to form words, b-oa-t). Word analysis or decoding instruction includes phonics as well as other ways to recognize words. Sight word recognition, for example, is taught along with phonics. Common and irregularly spelled words (was, want, to) are taught so that they are recognized on sight as whole words rather than being analyzed into smaller parts and blended. Morphology, or the use of prefixes, suffixes, and compounding to form words, may also be taught as an aid to word recognition.

**Fluency** in reading is the ability to read with speed and ease. When readers are fluent, they read accurately, without making mistakes in pronunciation, and with appropriate rate, intonation, and rhythm.

**Vocabulary** is a term used to refer to all of the words in a language. One person's vocabulary consists of all the words the person understands or knows the meaning of. *Vocabulary words* in reading instruction are usually those words that a person is studying in order to learn their meanings.

**Reading comprehension** is understanding a text that is read, or the process of "constructing meaning" from a text. Comprehension is a *construction process* because it involves all of the elements of the reading process working together to come up with what a text means. Readers interact with and become engaged in a text as ideas from the text are combined with their own prior knowledge or experience.

**Motivation** is the need and desire to learn to read. Motivation is especially important in adult literacy because in addition to an initial desire to learn to read, adults must set aside the time necessary to receive effective reading instruction, and overcome any embarrassment resulting from the stigma associated with seeking help for poor reading skills.

National Reading Panel. (2000a). *Report of the national reading panel: Teaching children to read*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

Snow, C. E., Burns, S. M., & Griffin, P. (Eds.). (1998). *Preventing reading difficulties in young children*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

## National Institute for Literacy Publications and Resources

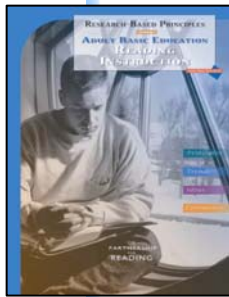
The National Institute for Literacy develops publications for families and educators of learners across the lifespan and disseminates them through its Literacy Information and Communication System (LINCS). LINCS Regional Resource Centers, Resource Collections, and Discussion Lists provide information on a wide variety of literacy and relevant topics, issues, and resources. As national attention has increasingly focused on the quality of instruction and educational resources, LINCS products provide quality information that is based on scientifically based research.

### A Summary of Scientifically Based Research Principles: Teaching Adults to Read

This booklet summarizes the emerging principles and trends in adult reading instruction identified in a report of the Reading Research Working Group: Research-Based Principles for Adult Basic Education Reading Instruction. It presents the results of the Working Group's review of adult reading instruction research; it is not intended to offer extensive examples of how the research can be translated into practice.



### Research-Based Principles for Adult Basic Education Reading Instruction



This report presents results from an analysis of the adult basic education reading instruction research base providing the best information available about how adults learn to read. It focuses on principles that can be derived from the research and outlines a research agenda for the future of educational research.

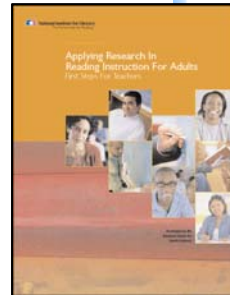
### Learning to Achieve: A Review of the Research Literature on Serving Adults with Learning Disabilities

The six topics covered in the review—assessment, English language learners, teaching methods, accommodations, transition, and impact of LD—address needs and issues consistently raised by service providers working in the field.



### Applying Research in Reading Instruction for Adults: First Steps for Teachers

This publication provides an introduction to research-based principles of reading instruction for instructors in adult education and literacy classes. It is intended as a first resource for those with little knowledge of reading instruction and is written with the needs of teachers in mind, those who



want to improve their ability to provide reading instruction for adults in family literacy and other basic education programs. This volume begins by building background knowledge of important concepts and principles and then suggests practical ways to apply research recommendations to the adult learning setting.

### What Content-Area Teachers Should Know About Adolescent Literacy

This publication helps address middle and high school classroom teachers', administrators', and parents' immediate need for basic information about how to build adolescents' reading and writing skills. This report summarizes some of the current literature on adolescent literacy research and practice, and suggests some methods of building adolescent reading and writing skills in the classroom.



### QEd

QEd brings you ideas and information from the expanding scientific research base on how adults learn to read. The first issue tells the story of how researchers are using the high quality, scientific standards that adult literacy deserves and demands.

## What is Scientifically Based Research? A Guide for Teachers

This brochure provides a brief introduction to understanding and using scientifically based research. Teachers can strengthen their instruction and protect their students' valuable time in school by scientifically evaluating claims about teaching methods and recognizing quality research when they see it.



## Using Research and Reason in Education

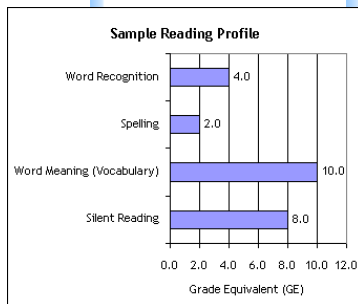


This publication provides guidance on how to recognize scientifically based instructional strategies, and how to use the concepts of research in the classroom. It offers a primer for those skills that will allow teachers to become independent evaluators

## Assessment Strategies and Reading Profiles (Web site)

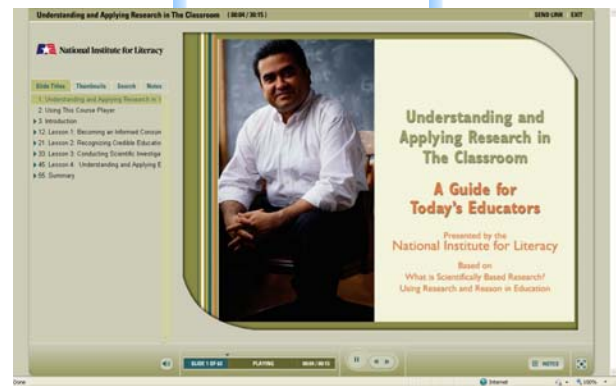
ASRP provides research-based assessment strategies to improve reading instruction for Adult Basic Education (ABE) and Adult Secondary Education (ASE) learners. Use the Web site to:

- learn about the components of reading
- learn about reading profiles and instruction
- watch videos of a teacher giving diagnostic reading tests to an adult learner
- download free tests with directions for administering and interpreting them
- match your adult learners' test scores to research-based adult reading profiles
- get instructional suggestions for teaching your learners based on their profile matches
- access additional resources and references on reading, assessment, and instruction



For more information visit: [www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles/](http://www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles/)

## Understanding and Applying Research in the Classroom: A Guide for Today's Educators



This self-paced online course introduces users to information about scientific research and its relevance to educational decision making.

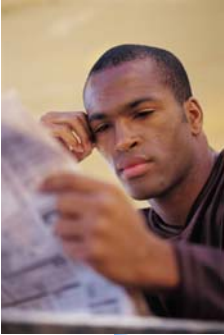

It is important for teachers to recognize credible information about instructional strategies in order to make informed decisions about which teaching methods to use in their classroom. This course will increase educators' awareness of education research methods and the characteristics of credible scientific research. It will help educators develop the ability to determine which research findings can be applied in their educational practice and are most likely to have a positive impact.

For more information visit [www.nifl.gov/pd/applyingresearch.html](http://www.nifl.gov/pd/applyingresearch.html)

To download copies of the publications or to learn more about these materials, visit [www.nifl.gov](http://www.nifl.gov) and click on **Publications**.

# Student Profiles

## Sample Adult Education Students—Ed and Ruth

	<p><b>Ed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 33 years old, single, born in Trinidad</li> <li>■ Second time in adult education program</li> <li>■ Low socioeconomic status (SES)</li> <li>■ Unemployed auto mechanic</li> <li>■ Wants a GED to get a good job</li> <li>■ Comprehension Score: Grade Equivalent (GE) 6</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Ruth</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 31-year-old native English speaker who was born and attended school through the 9th grade in Tennessee</li> <li>■ Has a GED but poor reading and math skills</li> <li>■ Diagnosed with a learning disability</li> <li>■ Comprehension Score: GE 6</li> </ul>

**Directions:** Use the slide to fill in the profile scores for Ed and Ruth.

	Ed	Ruth
Reading Comprehension (Silent Reading)	6	6
Word Analysis	—	—
Word Recognition	—	—
Spelling	—	—
Oral Reading Oral Reading Rate (WPM)	104	140
Oral Vocabulary (Word Meaning)	—	—

What do these additional scores suggest? Do you think Ed and Ruth are about the same when it comes to improving their reading comprehension? Why or Why not?

## Reading Profiles from the Adult Reading Components Study

	Sally	Rona	Ed	Leah
Reading Comprehension (Silent Reading)	8	4	6	4
Word Analysis	3.2	3.4	2.6	5.7
Word Recognition	3	3	5	10
Spelling	3	7	1	3
Oral Reading	5	4	5	6
Oral Vocabulary (Word Meaning)	6	4	8	3
Oral Reading Rate (WPM)	110	95	104	125

	Ruth	Mary	Luis	Tia
Reading Comprehension (Silent Reading)	6	2	4	4
Word Analysis	7.5	1.2	3.7	3.3
Word Recognition	7	2	5	4
Spelling	7	3	3	5
Oral Reading	10	5	12	7
Oral Vocabulary (Word Meaning)	7	4	4	5
Oral Reading Rate (WPM)	140	83	130	118

## Reading Checklist

What do you find hard about reading? Which of the following problems seem to apply to you when you read?

English	SALLY
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I can't read or pronounce the long, hard words.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I can't understand most of the hard words.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes I don't understand what I read.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I forget a lot of what I read right afterwards.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I forget a lot of what I read a few days later.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I read very slowly.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other problems? _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Spelling problems?

English	ED
<input type="checkbox"/>	I can't read or pronounce the long, hard words.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I can't understand most of the hard words.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes I don't understand what I read.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I forget a lot of what I read right afterwards.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I forget a lot of what I read a few days later.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I read very slowly.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other problems? _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Spelling problems?

English	RONA
<input type="checkbox"/>	I can't read or pronounce the long, hard words.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I can't understand most of the hard words.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes I don't understand what I read.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I forget a lot of what I read right afterwards.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I forget a lot of what I read a few days later.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I read very slowly.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other problems? _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Spelling problems?

English	LEAH	Native Language
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I can't read or pronounce the long, hard words.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I can't understand most of the hard words.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes I don't understand what I read.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	I forget a lot of what I read right afterwards.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	I forget a lot of what I read a few days later.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I read very slowly.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other problems? _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Spelling problems?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>



# Comprehension-Strategy Instruction

## Think-aloud Strategy

### Migration/Movement of Peoples

#### **When did people first migrate to the Western Hemisphere?**

From Europe's discovery of the American "Indian" at the end of the fifteenth century to the present, the questions of who the Native American populations are and how they came to the Western Hemisphere have intrigued scholars, clergymen, and laymen.

Early theories (put forth primarily by clergymen and not long after Columbus arrived in the Americas in 1492) posited that the New World's indigenous people were descended from the ten lost tribes of Israel, or that the Indians' ancestors were Welshmen, or even that the natives came from the fabled lost continents of Atlantis and Mu.

However, the advancement of anthropology has yielded some answers: . . . it is clear that the continents were settled through migration. Many scholars believe that Asians came to America during two periods: the first, between 50,000 and 40,000 B.C.; and the second, between 26,000 and 8000 B.C. They are believed to have come by way of a great land bridge over the Bering Strait, between Asia and North America. (This causeway was covered by water from about 40,000 to 26,000 B.C. because of a period of melting, which would have prevented passage.)

Reference: Excerpt from Nelson, R. (1999). *The handy history answer book*. Canton, MI: Visible Ink Press, 69.

## Activity: Planning a *Think Aloud*

### Materials

- Prohibition, p. 10
- Food and Drug Administration: Eating for a Healthy Heart, p. 11

**Directions:** Assemble in pairs. Each partner should use one of the handouts listed above to plan a think-aloud demonstration. Then perform your think aloud for your partner.

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### Prohibition

The period between 1920 and 1923 is known as the Prohibition era. In 1919, the adoption of the 18th Amendment made the manufacture, sale, and transportation of alcoholic beverages illegal. Prohibition, which was a response to the public opinion that alcohol destroyed lives and disrupted families, was a great failure. Bootleggers illegally produced and distributed alcohol. Speakeasies, illegal establishments where people could buy and drink alcohol, sprung up everywhere. Most of this illegal commerce was run by organized crime. . . .

**Reference:** Excerpted from *Access Critical Thinking Skills* (2004). Orlando, FL: Harcourt Achieve

## Eating for a Healthy Heart

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is a U. S. government agency that makes sure foods are safe, wholesome and honestly labeled.

### Eat Healthy to Help Prevent Heart Disease

What kills Americans most?

**Heart disease.** It's the No. 1 cause of death in this country.

You can lower your chances of getting heart disease. One way is to choose foods carefully. For a healthy heart, eat:

- less fat
- less sodium
- fewer calories
- more fiber

#### **Eat less fat**

Some fats are more likely to cause heart disease. These fats are usually found in foods from animals, such as meat, milk, cheese, and butter. They also are found in foods with palm and coconut oils.

**Eat less of these foods.**

**Eat less sodium.**

**Eating less sodium** can help lower some people's blood pressure. This can help reduce the risk of heart disease.

Sodium is something we need in our diets, but most of us eat too much of it. Much of the sodium we eat comes from salt we add to our food at the table or that food companies add to their foods. So, avoid adding salt to foods at the table.

**Eat fewer calories**

When we eat more calories than we need, we gain weight. Being overweight can cause heart disease.

When we **eat fewer calories** than we need, we lose weight.

**Eat more fiber**

**Eating fiber** from fruits, vegetables and grains may help lower your chances of getting heart disease.

### Diet Tips for a Healthy Heart

- Eat a diet low in saturated fat, especially animal fats and palm and coconut oils.
- Add foods to your diet that are high in monounsaturated fats, such olive oil, canola oil, and seafood.
- Eat foods containing polyunsaturated fats found in plants and seafood. Safflower oil and corn oil are high in polyunsaturated fats.
- Choose a diet moderate in salt and sodium.
- Maintain or improve your weight.
- Eat plenty of grain products, fruits and vegetables.

**Reference:** *Eating for a healthy heart* (2000) (FDA00-2302). Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Food and Drug Administration. Retrieved April 8, 2005, from <http://www.fda.gov/opacom/lowlit/hlyheart.html>.

## Activity: Planning Another Comprehension Strategy

### Materials:

- Prohibition—Excerpt from *Access Critical Thinking Skills* (2004), p. 10
- Food and Drug Administration: *Eating for a Healthy Heart*, p. 11

**Directions:** Assemble in small groups. Each group should use one of the passages listed above to plan a way to introduce one of the other strategies. Refer to the following pages in *Applying Research in Reading Instruction for Adults: First Steps for Teachers*:

- Graphic Organizers, pp. 83–87
- Question Generating, p. 89
- Summarization, pp. 93–96
- Cooperative Learning, p. 98

You can use pp. 89 and 90 of *Applying Research in Reading Instruction for Adults: First Steps for Teachers* for assistance. If time allows, you will share your ideas with the large group.

## Comprehension-Strategy Instruction Tips

- Provide instruction in comprehension strategies for learners at all reading levels.
- Teach learners how and when to use several broadly applicable, research-based strategies.
- Teach strategies one at a time, providing plenty of opportunities for guided practice to ensure learners can use them independently.
- Model the strategies for learners by thinking aloud as you read.
- Consider applying the comprehension strategies to listening comprehension, especially when working with weaker readers: Read text aloud or use taped readings.
- Consider readability level and learners' background knowledge when choosing texts for comprehension-strategy instruction.
- Because decoding, fluency, and vocabulary are required for comprehension, include instruction/practice in all appropriate components in reading lessons.

**Reference:** Adapted from McShane, S. (2005). *Applying Research in Reading Instruction for Adults: First Steps for Teachers*. Washington, DC: National Institute for Literacy.

## Comprehension Planning Guide

**Purpose of Instruction:** What strategy will be taught?

**Materials to be used:**

**Estimated number of lessons and time required:**

**Explanation:** How will you describe the strategy? How will learning the strategy help the student?

**Modeling:** What examples will be used? How will the strategy be demonstrated?

**Guided Practice:** How will students practice using the new strategy? What will the teacher do?

**Application:** What will students do? How will success be monitored?

## Next Steps

1. What will your next steps be? How will you use what you learned in this session with your particular students?

2. Think about your next steps.

Do your next steps require collaboration with your learner(s) or with other program staff? If so, when can you meet with them to discuss what you learned?

Do your next steps require personal study of the research findings? If so, what will you do next? How will you put what you've learned into practice?

Do your next steps require finding new materials for learners? If so, what will you do next?

If time remains, write down the one research finding about reading that is most likely to influence your practice and why it will do so.



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