

The 7 Keys to Comprehension

(& access to information in all content areas)

“Real comprehension has to do with thinking, learning, and expanding a reader’s knowledge and horizons.”

Zimmerman & Hutchins (2003)

1. Create mental images

Good readers create a wide range of visual, auditory, and other sensory images as they read, and they become emotionally involved with what they read.

2. Use background knowledge

Good readers use their relevant prior knowledge before, during, and after reading to enhance their understanding of what they’re reading.

3. Ask questions

Good readers generate questions before, during, and after reading to clarify meaning, make predictions, and focus their attention on what’s important.

4. Make inferences

Good readers use their prior knowledge and information from what they read to make predictions, seek answers to questions, draw conclusions, and create interpretations that deepen their understanding of the text.

5. Determine the most important idea or themes

Good readers identify key ideas or themes as they read, and they can distinguish between important and unimportant information.

6. Synthesize information

Good readers track their thinking as it evolves during reading, to get the overall meaning.

7. Use “fix-up” strategies

Good readers are aware of when they understand and when they don’t. If they have trouble understanding specific words, phrases, or longer passages, they use a wide range of problem-solving strategies including skipping ahead, rereading, asking questions, using a dictionary, and reading the passage aloud.