



FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION

by Laura Mahoney, C. Psych. Assoc. Psychology Manager LC1

Reading is one of life's greatest pleasures, as well as an essential skill. We spend a lot of time teaching our children to decode the words on the page, which is a necessary first step. But do we give as much attention to how well they understand what they read? After all, the purpose of reading is to gain meaning from printed material!

Parents of young children can create a good foundation by providing a language-rich home environment. Expose your child to good language structures and new vocabulary through your conversations and everyday discussions. Take a few minutes each day to snuggle up and read age-appropriate books together. When your child begins to read words by themselves, take turns reading aloud. Not only will this demonstrate fluent reading and expression, but it will give your child 'decoding breaks' so they can focus on the material itself. Encourage your child to visualize the information. While reading, occasionally pause to ask them questions about the story, such as: "How would you describe the main character?", and "What do you predict will happen next?" Ask your child to retell the story in their own words.

As children enter their middle and secondary school years, they are required to "read to learn" – to retrieve necessary facts and concepts from reading material. To do this, *students must engage in active reading* – they need to think about, or actively process, the information on a page. Information that is connected to personal experiences and previous knowledge is more likely to be meaningful and remembered.

There are several formal reading comprehension strategies that can help students to read actively. One of the best-known methods is called "SQ3R", which stands for "Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review."

Another strategy is the "KWL method", which is a visual organizer that supports active reading. Students identify prior knowledge and monitor reading progress by asking, "What do I already KNOW, what do I WANT to learn, and what have I LEARNED after reading?"

By encouraging active reading practices, you can help your child to develop strong reading comprehension skills. This will increase your child's enjoyment of reading and help them become fluent and knowledgeable readers for life. Happy reading, everyone!

To learn more:

[Watch this!](#) [Read this](#) or [this!](#)

Our articles, tips, and suggestions do not constitute treatment advice.

If you or a family member is in crisis, please contact [Kids Help Phone](#): 1-800-668-6868 or The Distress Centre: 416-408-4357

SQ3R METHOD



Survey

Before you read, skim the text. Look for headings, subheadings, bold words, pictures and charts.

? Question

Create 'who, what, when, where, why, and how' questions about the material, to set a purpose for reading and to activate connections to prior knowledge.



Recite

Break material into sections and read in chunks. Look for answers to your questions.



Read

Check your memory of the material by answering questions in your own words (either out loud or silently).



Review

Review the material and confirm or correct your answers.

TEST-TAKING SKILLS FOR TEENS

By Jennifer Kapler, M.A., C.Psych

As secondary schools return back to traditional routines and course schedules, students might find that they are faced with more exams and tests than in the past several years. For some students, taking a test or an exam can provoke stress and anxiety, especially if they have not had much experience with these in the recent past. Here are some helpful tips for successful test-taking and managing test anxiety in secondary school:



1 Identify Roadblocks

It could be helpful to identify what's 'getting in the way' when it comes to studying and test-taking. Help your teen to identify their specific roadblocks to successful test-taking, whether it is something external (for example, a lack of study strategies, too many distractions in class) or internal (such as, school stress, fear of failure). Once your teen has identified potential roadblocks, discuss ideas on how to 'clear the roadblocks', especially ones that are in their control.



2 Thinking Traps

According to decades of research, the thoughts we have directly effect how we feel, and also how we perform or act in any given situation. Sometimes, we can fall into "thinking traps" – unfair or overly negative ways of thinking – and these thoughts can lead to feelings of anxiety or shame, which can then negatively impact our performance. For example, thinking "I will definitely fail the math exam next week" doesn't necessarily mean it's true, but it might make your teen feel defeated and lead them to conclude that studying is pointless! Help your teen pay attention to their thoughts and feelings around test-taking, and identify common "thinking traps" they may have fallen into. Challenging those thoughts with more realistic thoughts ("I have a better chance of passing the math exam next week if I study hard and ask my teacher for help!") can be helpful.

TO LEARN MORE:

- [How to Deal with Test Anxiety & Successful Studying](#)
- [Thinking Traps & Thinking Right Tools](#)
- [Stress Management & Relaxation Exercises](#)
- [5 Research-Backed Study Techniques - Edutopia](#)
- [How to Help your Teen with Good Study Habits - Understood](#)



3 Learning Preferences & Study Skills

Not every student prefers to study or learn in the same way. It can be helpful for students to try many different techniques for learning and studying material, to determine what approach is best for them. If applicable, your teen should be aware of – and ask for! – test-taking accommodations that they have access to through their Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Help your teen learn & practice successful studying strategies, such as using mnemonic devices, graphic organizers, checklists or flashcards, chunking content into smaller, separate study sessions (spaced practice), paraphrasing and reflecting, reviewing concepts with a partner, or self-quizzing.



4 Healthy Habits

Getting a good night sleep, staying hydrated, and eating a full meal are essential for an alert and focused mind, and they are important steps leading up to a test. To manage test anxiety, your teen may find it helpful to do a simple relaxation exercise prior to, during, and/or after their test. Practice relaxation exercises with your teen on a regular basis so that they become automatic, and they can be used more easily during moments of stress.

Remember that tests and exams are a component of a student's education, but they do not solely define a student's success. If your teen is dealing with a significant amount of anxiety related to test performance, consider reaching out to their guidance counsellor or teachers for support.

MINDFULNESS

By Valbona Semovski, MSc., M.A. & Dr. Peter Mallouh, C. Psych.

What is Mindfulness?

The non-judgemental state achieved by attending to the present moment, through awareness and acceptance of thoughts, feelings, and senses.

Mindfulness Practices

These mindfulness activities can be helpful for you and your child:

Counting Breaths

1. Sit in a comfortable place with your back straight and body relaxed. Rest your hands on your knees.
2. Breathe in naturally and say 'one' in your mind. When breathing out, relax your forehead.
3. Breathe in naturally and say 'two' in your mind. When breathing out, relax your neck and shoulders.
4. Breathe in naturally and say 'three' in your mind. When breathing out, relax your stomach.

Five Senses

Use your 5 senses to ground yourself in the present moment and create a calming, mindful minute. Concentrate on:

5 SENSES MINDFULNESS EXERCISE

- 5 THINGS YOU CAN SEE
- 4 THINGS YOU CAN TOUCH
- 3 THINGS YOU CAN HEAR
- 2 THINGS YOU CAN SMELL
- 1 THING YOU CAN TASTE

MINDFULNESS RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES:



[Kids Help Phone videos and more information](#)



[YouTube video from TDSB & links to free resources](#)



Here We Grow!

By Paul Szego, Ph.D., C.Psych.

Children's Mental Health Week May 2nd to 6th, 2022

Do you ever wonder what makes your child happy or relaxed, especially when they're not feeling their best? What about things that make them feel proud? Maybe you wonder if *they* know what makes them happy when they're feeling a little down?

For Children's Mental Health Week (May 2–6), every student across the TDSB will be invited to think about and discuss what kinds of things they can do to help them become the best version of themselves.

With help from your school's staff and TDSB's Professional Support Services community, students will create a plant or flower that represents the different activities, foods, interests, habits, hobbies, and people that help them grow happy and healthy.

At the end of week, students will have opportunities to share their flower or plant with each other, and with you. Classes and schools might even create a "student garden" to showcase all the amazing ways their students grow!



COMMUNITY CORNER



What's happening at the TDSB in April & May

Autism ONTARIO | World Autism Day
Journée mondiale de l'autisme

CELEBRATE THE SPECTRUM!

Latin-America History Month
is proudly recognized at the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) during the month of April since 2016 because of a motion passed through our Board of Trustees.

This year our theme is *(De)Colonizing Latin-America History Month & Beyond: Learning about our collective pasts through the art of healing.*

A Virtual Launch Celebration to kick-off the month for Latin-America History Month has been scheduled and all students, staff, and community members are invited to attend!

Join us to learn about Latin-America through music, spoken word, & much more!

Click Here to Join!
Wednesday, April 6, 2022 1 pm - 2 pm

Parents as Partners

Virtual Conference
Monday, May 9, 2022
6:30-8:45 pm

National Jewish Heritage Month

May is
ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Celebrating Sikh Heritage Month

Check out these family-friendly resources from the TDSB!



MENTAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING VIRTUAL DROP-IN HOURS

For TDSB Parents & Caregivers

Connect with Professional Support Services staff to explore ideas related to your child's mental health and well-being

THURSDAYS 7-8PM

Visit www.tdsb.on.ca/virtualsupport

MENTAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING VIRTUAL DROP-IN HOURS

For TDSB Parents & Caregivers of Students with Complex Needs

Connect with Professional Support Services staff to explore ideas related to your child's mental health and well-being

WEDNESDAYS 7-8PM

Visit www.tdsb.on.ca/virtualsupport

Culturally Responsive Virtual Lounges & Resources

Mental Health Toolkits & Choice Boards