

Reading Ages

What the reading age means for our students and how you can support them.

Students with a reading age of 6-7 (largely considered non-readers)

Not yet able to demonstrate:

- An ability to deal with large text-based work without continuous help.
- An ability to infer meaning from a text without intensive support.

Able to demonstrate:

- An ability to work out phonetically regular words, e.g. h-a-t and r-u-n without support.
- An ability to read some sight words fluently but may even get regular compound words wrong e.g. 'football'.
- An ability to read short sentences without support as long as they contain mainly monosyllabic words.

Strategies to support reading in the classroom:

- Picture sequencing
- Don't make students read aloud to the group (instead use paired/group reading and monitor)
- Colour coding & labelling (*for example, the clues that could support and inference*)
- Scaffold and break down into smaller chunks
- Matching short sentences with images

Students with a reading age of 7-8

Not yet able to demonstrate:

- An ability to deal with large text-based work without continuous help.
- An ability to infer without support and will only be able to infer if they have previous contextual experience linked to the text.

Able to demonstrate:

- An ability to work out the meaning of basic words e.g. excited as long as it is based on images linked to the text and previous events in the text
- An ability to read a few sentences that are linked by meaning without support.
- An ability to use basic connectives e.g. 'Firstly', 'Then' to sequence events.
- An ability to recognise some subject specific vocabulary but only if they have been exposed to it in context many times before.
- That they know most common sight vocabulary e.g. 'football' and 'because'.

Strategies to support reading in the classroom:

- Don't make students read aloud to the group (instead use paired/group reading and monitor)
- Colour coding & labelling (*for example, the clues that could support and inference*)
- Scaffold and break down into smaller chunks
- Matching short sentences with images
- Cloze exercises (filling in missing subject specific words)
- Allowing students time to use their phonics knowledge in order to process the word
- Modelling the use of phonics to break down a word.

Students with a reading age of 8-9

Not yet able to demonstrate:

- An ability to deal with large text-based work without continuous help.
- An ability to decode subject specific vocabulary without support.
- An ability to recognise multiple meanings for the same word without guidance

Able to demonstrate:

- An ability to read most non subject specific vocabulary in a sentence.
- An ability to decode words with more than one syllable (polysyllabic)
- An ability to use complex connectives e.g. 'Before', 'Meanwhile' to sequence events.

Strategies to support reading in the classroom:

- Don't make students read aloud to the group (instead use paired/group reading and monitor)
- Colour coding & labelling
- Scaffold and break down into smaller chunks
- Cloze exercises (filling in missing subject specific words)
- Allowing students time to use their phonics knowledge in order to process the word
- Modelling the use of phonics to break down a word.
- Encourage independent writing in response to questions
- Make key word lists available for topic work
- Encourage students to work out the word from the context and look for clues surrounding the word.

Students with a reading age of 9-10

Not yet able to demonstrate:

- An ability to deal with large text-based work without some guidance and help.
- Confidence in their own reading ability.
- An ability to recognise multiple meanings for the same word without being guided to find clues to meaning in the text or being reminded of prior knowledge.
- An ability to independently decode new subject specific vocabulary

Able to demonstrate:

- An ability to read with some speed, fluency and accuracy
- An ability to decode complex vocabulary using clues from the text or lesson
- An ability to summarise the main events/ information in a given text

Strategies to support reading in the classroom:

- Don't make students read aloud to the group (instead use paired/group reading and monitor)
- Cloze exercises (filling in missing subject specific words)
- Allowing students time to use their phonics knowledge in order to process the word
- Modelling the use of phonics to break down a word.
- Make key word lists available for topic work
- Encourage independent writing
- Allow students to read in smaller groups, rather than to the whole class.

Students with a reading age of 10-11

Not yet able to demonstrate:

- An ability to deal with **large text-based** work without **some guidance and help.**
- **Confidence** in their own reading ability.
- An ability to **recognise multiple meanings** for the same word without context or guidance

Able to demonstrate:

- An ability to **independently decode** new **subject specific vocabulary**
- An ability to read **with speed, fluency and accuracy**
- An ability to **decode complex vocabulary** and make an educated guess to meaning
- An ability to **summarise** the main events/ information in a given text

Strategies to support reading in the classroom:

- Allowing students time to use their phonics knowledge in order to process the word
- Modelling the use of phonics to break down a word.
- Make key word lists available for topic work.
- Allow students to read in smaller groups, rather than to the whole class.
- Allow students to read the texts that they are studying independently, as well as a class.
- Ask students a range of questions that test their understanding of the text.
- Check assumptions of phrases, especially when there are ideas shared using figurative language.
- Using more complex strategies such as: empathy, prediction, establish a relationship with a writer, interpret patterns in a text and using prior knowledge.

Students with a reading age of 11-12

Not yet able to demonstrate:

- An ability to deal with **large text-based** work without **some guidance and help.**
- **Processing speed may be slow**, stopping student from identifying key words.
- **Areas of weakness with more complex Tier 2 and 3 vocabulary**

Able to demonstrate:

- A good **knowledge of phonetic sounds**, with **more fluent and accurate reading of individual words.**
- Starting to have a more comprehensive understanding of texts with **a good understanding of T1 and some T2 vocabulary.**

Strategies to support reading in the classroom:

- Identify features that occur in a range of text structures — using narrative and information texts.
- Ask the student to analyse, highlight and comment upon the location and organisation of information and features that help the reader to understand the text, e.g. chapter headings, index, sub-headings, etc.
- Help the student to analyse all the discourse markers to see how the author organises and sequences information, e.g. 'first', 'next', 'afterwards', 'so'.
- Teach the student sentence types and phrases that identify each structure.
- Make the links between reading and writing explicit. Teach reading and writing in parallel.
- When exploring a 'Word of the Week', talk about what it means, how to use it in context,

Students with a reading age of 12-13

Not yet able to demonstrate:

- May struggle to understand the syntax of a sentence.
- Processing speed still be a barrier, even though fluency developing.
- Areas of weakness with more complex Tier 2 and 3 vocabulary

Able to demonstrate:

- A good knowledge of phonetic sounds, with more fluent and accurate reading of individual words.
- Starting to have a more comprehensive understanding of texts with a good understanding of T1 and some T2 vocabulary.

Strategies to support reading in the classroom:

- Provide practice in summarising and paraphrasing pieces of text once a week.
- Provide retrieval practice by asking the student open retrieval questions, for example, 'Tell me what you can remember about that chapter...'
- Provide practice using 'gap fill' tasks using blacked out words in pieces of text
- Help the student to analyse all the discourse markers to see how the author organises and sequences information, e.g. 'first', 'next', 'afterwards', 'so'.
- Prime the student's memory prior to teaching, for example, when a reading comprehension task is given, discuss the vocabulary and the topic sentence beforehand.
- Teach the student to re-read the text before answering the question.
- When exploring a 'Word of the Week', talk about what it means, how to use it in context,

Students with a reading age of 13-14

Not yet able to demonstrate:

- May struggle to understand the syntax of a sentence.
- Processing speed still be a barrier, even though fluency developing.
- Areas of weakness with more complex Tier 2 and 3 vocabulary

Able to demonstrate:

- A good knowledge of phonetic sounds, with more fluent and accurate reading of individual words.
- Starting to have a more comprehensive understanding of texts with a good understanding of T1 and some T2 vocabulary.

Strategies to support reading in the classroom:

- Provide practice in summarising and paraphrasing pieces of text once a week.
- Provide retrieval practice by asking the student open retrieval questions, for example, 'Tell me what you can remember about that chapter...'
- Provide practice using 'gap fill' tasks using blacked out words in pieces of text
- Ask the student to demonstrate their understanding of the main parts of a story by describing what they know, giving examples or summarising the basic points in their, and then linking the ideas to their own personal experiences.
- When exploring a 'Word of the Week', talk about what it means, how to use it in context,

Students with a reading age of 14-15

Not yet able to demonstrate:

- May struggle to understand the **syntax of a sentence.**
- **Processing speed still be a barrier,** even though fluency developing.
- **Areas of weakness with more complex Tier 2 and 3 vocabulary**

Able to demonstrate:

- A good **knowledge of phonetic sounds,** with **more fluent and accurate reading of individual words.**
- Starting to have a more comprehensive understanding of texts with **a good understanding of T1 and some T2 vocabulary** and is **more confident in attributing meaning to words.**

Strategies to support reading in the classroom:

- Provide practice in summarising and paraphrasing pieces of text once a week.
- Provide retrieval practice by asking the student open retrieval questions, for example, 'Tell me what you can remember about that chapter...'
- Provide practice using 'gap fill' tasks using blacked out words in pieces of text.
- Ask the student to demonstrate their understanding of the main parts of a story, describing what they know, giving examples or summarising basic points and linking the ideas to personal experiences.
- Prime student's memory prior to teaching, for example, when a reading comprehension task is given.
- When exploring a 'Word of the Week', talk about what it means, how to use it in context,

Students with a reading age of 15-16

Not yet able to demonstrate:

- May struggle to understand the **syntax of a sentence.**
- **Areas of weakness with more complex Tier 2 and 3 vocabulary**

Able to demonstrate:

- A strong **knowledge of phonetic sounds,** with **fluent and accurate reading of texts.**
- A much more comprehensive understanding of texts with **a good understanding Tier 2 vocabulary**

Strategies to support reading in the classroom:

- Show student extracts of writing containing emotive and persuasive language. Discuss how word choices have their effect.
- Model your thoughts about the author's intentions, for example, 'This part makes me imagine...'; 'The author is saying to me...'; 'the message here seems to be...'
- Role play and record conversations between students involving different use of language, for example asking one student to speak in slang and another to speak in formal language. Discuss the effect that the different registers have on the listener and the communication.
- Build understanding of different writing styles and the way they sound to the reader — for example, by comparing two different newspaper reports of the same event. Talk to student about the purpose of the text and the writer's motives.
- When exploring a 'Word of the Week', talk about what it means, how to use it in context,

Students with a reading age of 16-17

Not yet able to demonstrate:

- Areas of weakness with more complex Tier 2 and 3 vocabulary

Able to demonstrate:

- A strong knowledge of phonetic sounds, with fluent and accurate reading of texts.
- Secure understanding Tier 2 and better understanding of 3 vocabulary

Strategies to support reading in the classroom:

- Continue to emphasise that reading should be a pleasurable and meaningful experience.
- Develop the student's reading stamina to support meaningful comprehension by creating regular opportunities for reading with peers and independently.
- Point out and discuss new and challenging vocabulary during meaningful shared and guided reading activities.
- Provide examples of ambitious vocabulary in real contexts so that the student can begin to incorporate this new vocabulary into their own spoken language, reading and writing.
- Increase the student's exposure to more sophisticated words through reading and discussing word choice, effect and author intent, as you read together.
- Make time for student to share books with more experienced readers that are beyond their independent reading ability, or that are from less familiar genres.
- Increase the frequency of vocabulary development activities used with the student, e.g. word building, dictionary challenges, magpie activities.
- Before asking the student to access reading or writing activities, increase the amount of teacher-led discussion used in preparation to build the context for meaning making.
Develop the student's interest in words and language use and meaning through investigation. Collect and display interesting words.
- When exploring a 'Word of the Week', talk about what it means, how to use it in context, how to spell it, where the word originated from. At the end of each term revise all of the previous focus words.
- When teaching new spellings spend more time with the student discussing the origins of words, the meanings of words and how the words work in context.

Stretching Students Even Further (Reading to Learn rather than Learning to Read):

Strategies to stretch and challenge reading in the classroom:

- Plan texts into your curriculum that stretch the reading abilities of your students (know their reading ages and pitch it above that with a clear plan for progression).
- Remove as much support as necessary and instil independent learning strategies, such as using a dictionary.
- Explicitly teach research skills (in order to independently read and find the correct progression in further reading and connecting to background knowledge).
- Explicitly teach critical thinking & metacognitive skills (in order to go beyond surface-level comprehension including making connections to other texts and personally responding to them).
- Refer students to the KS4 and KS5 Super Curriculum Reading Lists.
- Flipped Learning – give pre-reading tasks and research prior to exploring class ideas.
- Tier 2 and 3 vocabulary – students pre-learn ahead of the lesson.
- Debates and other extended oracy activities that require students to construct arguments and extend their knowledge on the basis of reading they have carried out.
- Deep-end problem-solving and extended writing activities with reduced levels of scaffold support on the basis of reading that they have carried out.
- Group stronger readers as support for weaker readers to embed their knowledge and skills of reading.
- Group strong readers together to delve into an advanced text.

Notes: