



Instructional Strategy: Paragraph Shrinking

The paragraph-shrinking strategy allows each student to take turns reading, pausing, and summarizing the main points of each paragraph. This strategy is designed to be used in pairs and is applicable for grades K-8. This strategy will take approximately 6- 8 minutes to group students, assign tasks, and complete the tasks.

Comprehension Routine Steps:

1. Select a reading passage or excerpt and introduce the text to the students. Model the routine for the class first:
 - Read aloud for 3-5 minutes without rereading the text. After each paragraph, stop to summarize the main points of the reading, as you “think aloud” to show the students what you are considering as you summarize each piece of information.
 - i. Ask students to then help you summarize the following information:
 1. The who or what of the paragraph
 2. The most important thing about who or what
 3. The main idea
 - This procedure may need to be repeated over several sessions until students show they know how to easily walk through the 3 questions within partnerships without prompts.
2. Create pairs within the classroom- this may require putting a higher reader with a moderate reader and a moderate reader with a striving reader. Repeat the process until all students are paired.
3. Model the procedure to ensure understanding and also demonstrate acceptable behaviors while with partners.
4. Have each member of the teacher-assigned pair take turns being "Coach" and "Player." Describe each of those roles thoroughly practicing what to do and not to do!
5. Ask each student to read aloud for 3-5 minutes without rereading the text (the Coach). After each paragraph, students should stop to ask their partner (The Player) to summarize the main points of the reading. Ask students to then summarize the following information together:
 - The who or what of the paragraph
 - The most important thing about who or what
 - The main idea.
6. Bring the class together. Ask students to state the main idea their partnership came up with. Whittle the statements down to 10 words or less and write the main idea on chart paper to review the following day.
7. Repeat the routine several times until the class is able to whittle down a main idea statement to 10 words or less with few prompts.



Materials/Resources:

[Teacher Template](#)

[Paragraph Shrinking Student Cards](#)

Watch it in Action:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mjEIwUP8NT8>

Connections to Iowa Core:

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

Research and Theory:

Fuchs, D., Fuchs, L., & Burish, P. (2000). Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies: An Evidence-Based Practice to Promote Reading Achievement. *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice*, 15(2), 85-91.

Fuchs, L., Fuchs, D., & Kazdan, S. (1999). Effects of peer-assisted learning strategies on high school students with serious reading problems. *Remedial and Special Education*, 20(5), 309-318.

Saenz, L., Fuchs, L., & Fuchs, D. (2005) Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies for English Language Learners with Learning Disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, (71).

Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Research on Human Development. (n.d.). Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies. Retrieved 2008, January 21, from <http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/pals/>