



The RITES FACTS

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THE READING PROCESS: THE MANY PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

Reading challenges come in many forms, because there are many components to reading. The first step of reading is **learning to read**, which incorporates all the skills listed below. Once these skills are intact, the next step in the sequence is **reading comprehension** in order to gain meaning from text; however, if a student has difficulty acquiring the requisite skills, s/he may not learn to read or, may learn to read, but not be able to understand what is being read. In order to help a struggling reader, a well-trained reading teacher assesses which piece(s) are impeding progress and designs a reading program that addresses the difficulties. The following are the key, core skills needed for successful reading throughout the school years:

- **Phonemic Awareness:** Recognizing, hearing and using, or manipulating the sound/symbol relationships of the English alphabet.
- **Phonics/Decoding/Encoding:** The systematic sounding out of letters and their sounds, breaking words down into their sound parts successfully, and then blending them back together for proper word pronunciation.
- **Morphology:** The origin and understanding of word roots, prefixes and suffixes – important for approaching unfamiliar words.
- **Vocabulary Development:** Learning new words and their meanings to enrich language acquisition and use.
- **Sight Word Recognition:** Being able to read (and spell) words that do not fit into the established patterns of the English language – crucial, as many of these words are commonly used and are part of the “high-frequency” word lists elementary students are expected to know.
- **Fluency:** Automaticity, proper pacing, connectivity, and inflection (vocal modulation) while reading – aids comprehension when intact, impairs comprehension when weak.
- **Comprehension:** Understanding what is read to gain meaning from text – the purpose of reading.

Students can struggle with some or all of the components of learning to read, different aspects of understanding what they read, or a combination of both.