

Literacy and Numeracy for NCEA Level 1 - Reading


Annotating

Content

This resource supports the teaching and learning of comprehension strategies that can be used in conjunction with Unit Standard 26624: Read texts with understanding. 'Reading with understanding' assumes learners are *active* meaning makers, not passive consumers of text. This means that learners must be able to use *strategies* to facilitate meaning making and that they have a range of strategies they can employ when meaning breaks down. This resource is part of a set of resources which include teaching and learning sequences designed to develop learners' ability to apply a strategy. The sequence is suitable for learners in any context which requires reading texts.

Alignment

The content aligns with step 4/5 of the Comprehension progression.



- use strategies to read an increasingly varied range of more complex texts for specific purposes
- use strategies to locate, organise and summarise important information in texts
- use strategies to gather and synthesise information from across a small range of texts
- have increasing control over how they use comprehension strategies.

Fig 1. Step 4/5 of the Comprehension progression

Intent

The intent of this resource is to develop a learner's ability to apply the strategy of annotating. Annotating promotes active reading behaviours, such as asking questions, evaluating information, identifying key words and ideas, synthesising and summarising.

Sequence

There are three parts to this sequence.

1. Introduce the concept of 'talking to the text'
2. Develop annotating skills
3. Introduce and practise the use of comment codes.

1. Introduce the concept of 'talking to the text'.

Step one: Open a discussion with all learners about how people can respond to what they read.

You might begin like this:

Has something you read ever made you so mad, that as you are reading, in your head you are like, "No! that's not true", or, "Yes that may be true, but you have forgotten to mention the other side of the argument." Maybe you have seen something on TV that makes you mad. For example, you are watching the rugby, and the ref makes a bad call, and you're screaming at the TV, "NO, you got it wrong!"

Encourage learners to share stories. Then summarise:

Well, do you see that you can actually have a type of conversation with your TV or something you read, without it actually responding to your words? Notice that when this happens you are deeply engaged in what is happening. You care. You are passionate. This is how good readers read. They talk to the text as they read.

Even if what you are reading is a bit boring, you can make it more interesting by talking to it.

Learners might find this difficult to believe or understand at first – but talking to the text *is* active reading. It is also how expert readers read when they are reading complex texts.

Step two: Model *talking to the text* to the learners. Use a data projector to display a text on the board so the class can read the text and observe you *talk to* it. Persuasive texts work well.

Read the text aloud and engage in a discourse with it. For example:

Text	Tutor talk
<p>There is a lot of discussion about whether the age at which a person can gain a drivers' licence should be raised from 16 to 18.</p> <p>The people who agree with this idea, such as the New Zealand Police, claim that young people are over-represented in the driver accident statistics and take up more police time than other drivers. They also argue that young people are more prone to peer pressure, that they have increasingly powerful vehicles and are at greater risk of injuring themselves and others. A further point they make is that teenagers are less able to evaluate the consequences of their actions.</p> <p>They tend to be more impulsive and higher risk takers. This idea is often supported by references to immature frontal brain development.</p>	<p>Is there really? Who's talking about it?</p> <p>Oh, the police are. I wonder why?</p> <p>Oh I see, young people are crashing more. Makes some good points - Or are they? Not sure that teenagers are less able to evaluate their actions.</p> <p>Hmmm, maybe? But where is the research! I'll come back to this and see if it comes up later in the article.</p> <p>So the police argument is that ... (summarises argument).</p>

Emphasise the point to learners that this is the type of *talking* you can do in your head as you read.

Research has shown that students who read like this retain more information and retain it for longer. This process can be facilitated by teaching students to annotate as they read.

2. Develop annotating skills

Annotating is *writing as thinking*. It is the practice of writing your conversation on the text as you read.

Step one: Inform learners that there are a range of annotating approaches. These include activities such as circling, underlining or highlighting words or sentences, putting brackets around paragraphs, asking questions, marking significant changes in the text, making statements and linking ideas. Annotating can be done in the margins of the text and directly within the text. You may need to show learners what is meant by a *margin*.

Discuss with learners that annotating involves asking questions as you read, writing these in the margin, and then looking for answers. Once the answers are found, these can also be written or linked to the question by using circles and arrows. The same process is used for recording statements, predictions, arguments, and connecting different aspects of the text.

The reader can also identify and circle, underline or highlight the main ideas or main events in the text. It is well worth noting *what the author wants me to know*. This is the main message or idea you believe the author wants you to take from the text.

An annotated text can be read again at a later time and the annotations can help refresh your memory of the content and make further sense of the text.

Step two: Photocopy a well-annotated page and hand it out to the students. You may have to prepare this in advance using a text from your course materials.

Implement a *snowball approach*. Ask learners to individually read the text and annotations and work out why the writer wrote what they did. Next, ask learners to move into pairs and discuss. After several minutes ask the pairs to form groups of four and discuss. Finally, discuss the text and annotations with the whole class.

Draw out the features of the annotation, why they were done, what they were in response to, what they mean, and how they might have helped the reader.

Tip: Learning to annotate takes time, but it is a key skill practised by expert readers. Once learners begin to annotate, it is a practice that will support their reading throughout their lives.

3. Introduce and practise the use of comment codes

Once the learner are familiar with annotating a text, you can introduce *comment codes*. Comment codes are a type of annotation that supports learners to become active readers. A full description can be found on page 52 of [Teaching Adults to Read with Understanding: Using the Learning Progressions](#).

Instead of writing comments into the margins of a text, the reader uses a code to annotate as they read.

Examples of comment codes:

A = agree

DA = disagree

MI = main idea

I = interesting

CTO = check this out

This activity can also be suitable for learners that might struggle with transitioning into full annotating, so can be used prior to the previous activity: Develop annotating skills, after the concept of 'talking to the text' has been introduced.

Step one: Write the codes on the boards and elicit the meanings. Show that these codes can be written into the text as they read.

Step two: Hand out a text to the class, and if possible also project it onto the whiteboard.

Step three: Read through the text with the class and discuss where comment codes can be used.

Do we agree with this statement? Do you not agree? Then use a code.

Is this bit useful, or is it irrelevant? Then code it.

Step four: Discuss with the learners how this helps 'talking to the text'. Ask learners to keep their text with the codes.

Step five: It is useful to review the same text and annotations a week later. Review the text as a whole class. Key questions might include:

- Why did I code it this way?
- Do I still think this?
- Did the codes help me remember the text?

Finally, reinforce the use of annotating as you tutor the class. Encourage learners to annotate while they read in class, and to continue to cultivate the skill throughout their lives.