

## Short guide 5: Reading and understanding course texts

### What are you doing already?

Every time you direct a learner to where they can find information in a workbook and make sure your workbook has a contents page or glossary you are helping your learners to read and understand the texts in the course. In this short guide you will find activities that you could use to further support your learners.

Learners need to understand how to find their way around course texts and they need to understand/ comprehend what the texts say.



Taking some time to point out the key features of the texts in your course to learners will help them feel more confident and therefore more likely to engage with what they are reading.



Repeating this when you give learners something they haven't seen before such as an instruction manual will also be helpful.



Learners need to be given something to DO when they read, this will help them to engage with the material.



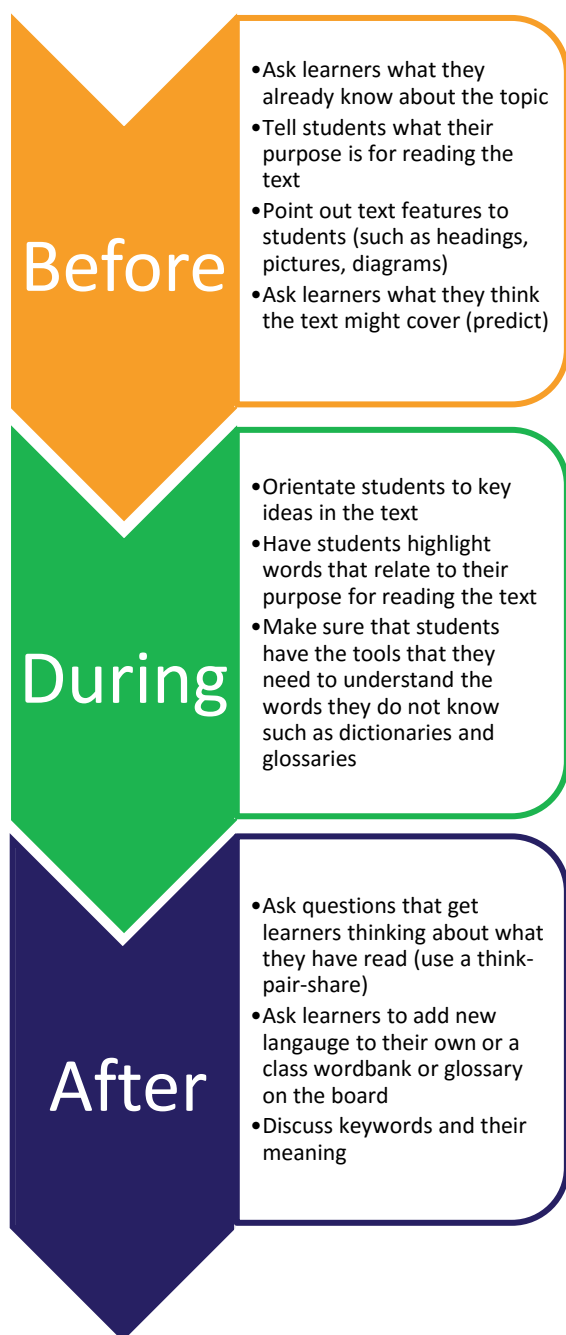
Develop your own routine that you can use every time you give learners something to read, this will get you into the habit.

### What skills do your learners need?

Identifying what skills your learners need means that you can intentionally work to build these skills as you teach, tick the ones that are relevant:

Using a contents page or index to find their way around the text.	
Using headings and sub headings to find their way around the text.	
Locating information in tables, charts and graphs.	
Locating information in large paragraphs of writing.	
Relating diagrams to written explanations.	
Scanning a document to find a key word or phrase.	
Understand that bold, underlined or italicised text is used for emphasis.	
Use markers such as bullet points and numbering to work out order.	
Make connections between what they read and what they know from other contexts such as the workshop, what you tell them, their prior knowledge.	
Figure out what information is important in what they read.	
Understand complex words that are not relevant to the content such as academic words and words of many syllables.	
Summarise what they read for practical tasks or assessments.	
Read about a process and break down the steps in that process.	
Understand that some of the words in the programme have more than one meaning e.g. teeth on a saw vs. teeth in a mouth.	
Read between the lines to see if there are underlying meanings.	
Know what to do when they don't understand the text.	
Skim over a text to get the gist.	
Understand what diagrams are representing.	
Interpret and make meaning from charts and tables.	

## Some examples



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Asking questions about what learners have read is a great way to build understanding and comprehension skills. Here are some examples of questions you could ask:

Ask a question that checks understanding of a key idea in the text,  
*e.g., What does it mean to prep a wall?*

Ask a question that encourages learners to use the text features to assist their understanding,  
*e.g., What does figure 1 show you about sanding a wall?*

Choose a word that you think learners may have difficulty with. Ask them to read around it and share what they think it means in that piece of writing,  
*e.g., In paragraph 2 what do they mean by the term 'access'?*

Ask a question that encourages learners to evaluate the text,  
*e.g., Are those instructions for prepping a wall accurate?*

Encourage learners to apply what they have read to a real scenario,  
*e.g., How would the wall prep process change if the wall had signs of water damage?*

Try to encourage learners to understand implied meanings,  
*e.g., What do they mean when they say season to taste?*

Also think about how you support learners when understanding breaks down:

- Give glossaries, dictionaries, online dictionaries.
- Give low risk ways to say 'I don't understand' such as writing it down and putting it on a post-it on the edge of their desk for you to collect and discuss.
- Use plain English, talk about the meaning of the text as you go, translate for them.
- Ask the more confident learners to explain things in their own words – they may put it in a way their peers will understand!
- Model the fact it is ok when you don't understand what you read; if you come across a word or phrase that is new to you, tell your learners and find the meaning together.