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# Prompting Guide <sup>PART</sup> 1

for Oral Reading and Early Writing

Teach



Prompt



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# Prompting Guide

PART 1

for **Oral Reading**  
and **Early Writing**

## Introduction

### Readers and the Reading Process

Reading is a highly complex process. Each reader builds a system for processing texts that begins with early reading behaviors and becomes a network of strategic activities for reading increasingly challenging texts. The construction of the systems “in the head” is unique for each student. Marie Clay (1991) described readers’ paths to proficient reading as “different paths to common outcomes.”

You can observe the behaviors of readers as they process texts. From your observations, you infer the “in-the-head” actions (systems of strategic activities) that a reader initiates to problem-solve getting the message of the text.

When readers process instructional level [“just-right”] texts, they engage their in-the-head systems and expand them as they problem-solve. They strengthen their reading power by putting their systems to work on the text.

### Texts

Readers build processing systems by reading and writing connected text. To expand the system, the text should require a reader to do some problem solving against a backdrop of text that is read easily. The text needs to offer enough challenge for the reader to learn on the text, expanding reading powers.

When texts are arranged along a gradient from easy to more difficult, you can select a text that offers the right amount of challenge, providing opportunities for a reader to build his current strengths and support new learning. We have organized texts along an A to Z continuum to help you select appropriate texts for instruction.

### Teaching

Your role is to notice each student’s precise reading and writing behaviors and provide teaching that supports change in what she can do over time. As you infer from the behaviors how a reader or writer is building a system of strategic actions, you can make effective instructional decisions.

Observe accurate responses, partially correct responses, and incorrect responses so you can facilitate the student’s problem solving by teaching for, prompting for, or reinforcing effective actions. The language in this guide is designed to help you initiate brief, powerful interactions that help readers build systems for working on print that readers can, over time, extend themselves (Clay, 1991).

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## Teaching for Strategic Actions in Reading and Writing



### Reading

We suggest precise language for teaching so you can help readers use early behaviors and develop systems of strategic actions for processing texts.

**EARLY READING BEHAVIORS** Readers need to know where to look at and in what order to process the print as it is laid out on a page. This includes reading left to right and returning to the left to process a simple text. We include language designed to support the reader's ability to read left to right, return to the left, match one spoken word with one written word, and to check on himself.

**SEARCHING FOR AND USING INFORMATION** Readers need to learn how to look for and use the visual information, the language structure, and the meaning of the text as they problem-solve. They need to initiate attempts at problem solving, using all sources of information together, as they work to read with accuracy and understanding.

**SOLVING WORDS** Readers need to learn how to analyze words. They need to develop a variety of flexible ways to use letter-sound relationships and word parts, so they can take words apart letter by letter or cluster by cluster or use what they know about words to help them read new words. They also need to learn how to use the language structure and the meaning of the text to support their word solving. When word solving is efficient and smooth, attention is freed for deeper thinking about the text.

**MONITORING AND CORRECTING ERRORS** Readers need to use all sources of information in the text to confirm their predictions or notice mismatches and work to correct them. Early readers display overt behaviors like stopping, hesitating, or making multiple attempts that indicate that they notice something is not right and they try to work it out. When efforts result in self-correction, the reader has engaged in important learning work. Self-correction changes over time, from rereading a whole sentence, to a phrase, to a correction at the word. Eventually it goes underground or "in the head." (Clay, 1991)

**MAINTAINING FLUENCY** Readers need to recognize words rapidly or take them apart quickly to read at a good rate. They need to anticipate language structure using phrase units, to vary their voice, stress the appropriate words, and read the punctuation. Effective readers use all of these characteristics in a smooth, integrated processing system.



### Writing

We suggest language for the teaching of writing so you can help readers use early writing behaviors and strategic actions for composing and constructing words in texts. These basic competencies will support their independent writing.

**COMPOSING SENTENCES** Early writers need to learn how to compose language around a topic of interest. Engage the writer in thinking about ideas and communicating those ideas in language.

**EARLY WRITING BEHAVIORS** Writers need to learn how to place words on the page and form letters. They need to learn how to start on the left, move to the right, and return to the left to start again. They need to learn how to use the white space to differentiate words.

**VERBAL PATH FOR LETTER FORMATION** It is important to help students learn how to write letters efficiently so they can write with fluency. The specific language is used to get movement going in the right way. You can have the writer make the formations with a finger in the air, on the table, in sand or salt in a tray, or with a thick marker or thin marker to develop the movement early on. Over time, the actions become internalized and automatic and the language is not needed.

**CONSTRUCTING WORDS** Writers need to learn a variety of ways to construct words: through sound analysis, through visual analysis, and through the use of word parts and analogy. They also need to learn how to write high-frequency words quickly. It is also important that they learn how to monitor and correct their spelling.

**CONVENTIONS** Writers need to learn how to use capitalization and punctuation to convey accurate messages to readers. They need to reread their writing to check for conventions.

**REVISITING THE TEXT FOR WORD STUDY** Readers and writers need to confirm their knowledge of how words look. When they look back in the text, they consolidate their understandings of how words work. When writers revisit the written text, they learn how to notice aspects of words to support automaticity and fluency in reading and writing.

# Searching for and Using Information *(continued)*

## Visual Information

### TEACH

You can read it again and start the word. (model rereading and articulate the first sound)

You can get your mouth ready to start the tricky word. (model)

You can say it slowly like when you write it. (model)

You can think of a part you know. (model)

It sounds like that, but it looks different.

### PROMPT

Get your mouth ready for the first sound.

Sound the first part and think about what the word could be.

Think about the first sound.

Say the first sound.

That sounds like the beginning of \_\_\_\_\_.

What sound does it make?

What letter do you see first?

Look at the first letter (part).

What do you expect to see at the beginning (middle, end)?

Do you think it looks like \_\_\_\_\_?

It looks like \_\_\_\_\_ (insert another word they know).

Think about how the word looks.

Try \_\_\_\_\_. Would that look right?

What would look right there?

Do you know a word that would fit the meaning and look like (start like, end like) \_\_\_\_\_?

Can you find \_\_\_\_ (a known or new word)?

Do you know a word like that?

Do you know a word that starts (ends) like that?

Is that like any other words you know?

Look at the first part (...the middle part. ... the last part).

Think about what you know that might help.

What do you know like that?

Do you see a part that can help?

Say it slowly like when you write it.

Run a finger under it while you say it slowly.

Look at all the letters.

You are nearly right. Add a letter (ending) to make it look right.

### REINFORCE

You thought about the first sound and it helped you.

You read that again and started the tricky word.

You thought about what would look right.

You added a letter and now it looks right.

You thought of another word like that.

You thought of another word you know.

You used a part you know.

You looked at all the letters.

You thought about a part you know.

# Maintaining Fluency



Be sure to insist on phrased, fluent reading early in the text so the reader processes the whole text with a forward momentum, thinking about the meaning and language structure while reading the text.

## Rate

### TEACH

I am going to read this faster.

Listen to how I read this.

Listen to how I read this quickly.

### PROMPT

Listen to me read fast. Can you read it like that?

Read these words quickly. (model)

Can you read this quickly? (model)

Read this part again, faster.

Move your eyes forward quickly so that you can read more words together. (This may be accompanied by pushing a card across the line of text.)

### REINFORCE

You read it faster that time.

You read it quickly.

You read more words together.

## Pausing

### TEACH

Listen to me read this. Can you hear me take a little breath at the comma?

Listen to me read this. Can you hear my voice go up at the question mark?

Listen to me read this. Can you hear my voice go down at the period?

### PROMPT

Make a full stop at the period.

Make your voice go down when you see the period.

Make your voice go up when you see the question mark.

Take a little (or short) pause when you see the comma (or dash).

Set off the parentheses by stopping before them and after them.

Read it again and read the punctuation.  
Read the punctuation.

### REINFORCE

You took a little breath.

You made a full stop.

You made your voice go down when you saw the period.

You made your voice go up when you saw the question mark.





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