

How to Teach Reading Skills: 10 Best Practices Reading classes are often very...quiet. What is the climate like?" A discussion before the reading on its topics builds background knowledge and the comprehensibility of the text as well as giving the teacher an idea of where students' background knowledge needs to be developed more.

5 Expose different discourse patterns The narrative form is familiar to most students. In addition, it is popular to teachers. It is easy to teach: we've been reading and hearing stories most of our lives. However, reports, business letters, personal letters, articles, and essays are also genres that students will have to understand as they leave school and enter the working world. We understand the discourse pattern of a story: that is, its pattern of organization. It is related chronologically, for the most part; it is in the past with past tense verb forms; it is structured around a series of increasingly dramatic events that build to a climax or high point, and so forth. The discourse pattern of an essay for example, may be less familiar but still important to understanding the text: that it is built around a series of topics related to one main idea or thesis. Knowing the discourse pattern lets the reader know what to expect, and therefore increases comprehensibility.

6 Work in groups Students should work in groups each session, reading aloud to each other, discussing the material, doing question and answer, and so forth. Working in groups provides the much needed interactivity to increase motivation and learning. Students may choose their own groups or be assigned one, and groups may vary in size.

7 Make connections Make connections to other disciplines, to the outside world, to other students. Act out scenes from the reading, bring in related speakers, and or hold field trips on the topic. Help students see the value of reading by connecting reading to the outside world and show its use there.

8 Extended practice Too often we complete a reading and then don't revisit it. However, related activities in vocabulary, grammar, comprehension questions, and discussion increase the processing of the reading and boost student learning.

9 Assess informally Too often people think "test" when they hear the word "assess." Other means of informal assessment might be short surveys or question sheets. Hand out a passage that seems to be at your students' approximate level and then hold a brief discussion, ask some questions, and define some vocabulary to determine if the passage is at the students' instructional level. Teaching reading with texts on these topics will heighten student motivation to read and therefore ensure that they do read and improve their skills. Does the discussion show they really understand the text?