

BEVERLY HILLS GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL

Reciprocal Teaching

A guide for teachers

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Background

Reciprocal Teaching is a teaching strategy created by Annemarie Sullivan-Palincsar and Ann Brown (1984), initially intended for students who could read but who were well behind their peers in reading comprehension. The students who received reciprocal teaching **improved** in their **ability to comprehend, summarise and ask relevant questions**. One of the real benefits of reciprocal reading is that the students' improved comprehension skills can be transferred into their everyday reading and listening in all subject areas.

Reciprocal reading aims to improve the following skills:

1. Create Understanding
2. Monitor Understanding
3. Improve and clarify their understanding when comprehension fails.

The aims to do this through the following student activities: reading, summarising, questioning, clarifying and predicting.

The activity is best performed in small group of approximately 5 students. However, it can also be carried out in a whole class setting, creating a larger discussion between the students. (Note: The whole class format will work better with senior students.)

Teacher's Role

When first implementing reciprocal teaching in the classroom, the teacher's role will be quite prominent. As time goes on and students develop the skills needed to carry out the activity, the teacher's role will be minimised and can instead be used for observing and providing effective feedback for students on their progress.

The teacher's role in the initial few cycles of the activity include **leading the group**, asking a question, getting an answer and then summarising in order to 'model' the concept of reciprocal teaching. The teacher should also 'think aloud' so that the process of comprehending is exemplified to the students. E.g. "The main point so far is that the goal of reciprocal teaching is to improve comprehension skills, so I suppose a good question would be..." The teacher should also model the roles of the predictor and the clarifier.

Benefits of Using Reciprocal Teaching

The reciprocal teaching process has an **effective size of 0.86** and can be used with students from all different age groups.

After the experiments of reciprocal teaching were undertaken, classroom teachers noted that their students' **study and thinking skills had improved**. They were more effectively able to locate important information and organise their ideas. Students stated that finding the good right question was the hardest part and that summarising was the most helpful activity.

In order to measure the improvement of reciprocal teaching, unassisted comprehension exercises were given before and after reciprocal teaching, and found there was an improvement in results from 40% - 80%.

Student Roles

The Leader/Big Boss

- Instructs students on what to read.
- Invites each student to perform the process after reading each paragraph/page/chapter.
- Checks that all students are contributing and joining in.

Predicting

The main aim is for the students to use prior knowledge and common sense to make sense of the text and to maintain a purpose for the reading.

- Uses what has been read or clues from the illustrations to predict what will happen next.
- This will encourage students to continue reading so that they can test out their predictions.
- Predictive sentences may start with:

I think...	I predict...	I think this	I bet that...
I wonder		text will be	
if...		about...	

Clarifying

The main aim is for the students to improve understanding, but can also be used to show others how to assign meaning or exemplify the process of clarifying a word/sentence.

- Students help each other clarify whenever words or phrases they don't understand.
- May give reason as to what they did to help them understand the text

Questioning

The main aim is for the students to begin to isolate a key point, to self-check an understanding of this by creating an answer, and to check the understanding of the others in the group.

- Students come up with higher order questions which aim to create deeper understanding.
- Questions are usually formed throughout the discussion or reading process.
- Questions should start with:

Who...?	Why...?	Where...?
What...?	How...?	What if...?
	When...?	

Summarising

The main aim is for the students to identify and integrate the main points in the text in order to create meaning.

- Students give a short recount of what has happened after a text has been read.
- Sentences may start with the following:

The most important ideas are...	This part was about...
The main idea is...	First...,Next...,Then...

Diagram of Activity

Ideally this activity will be done in groups of 5. One student is assigned as leader. After the completion of each cycle, a new leader should be elected so that each student gets to experience leading the group.

