



## HANDOUT: COMPREHENSION ACTIVITIES

### Think-Aloud Technique

The Think-Aloud technique is a great way to help adult learners improve their reading comprehension skills. In the Think-Aloud technique, you read a passage aloud to the learners. As you read, you periodically think out loud as you apply different reading comprehension strategies. This helps learners see the “invisible” strategies good readers use when they read. Below are the steps for the Think-Aloud technique.

#### Steps

1. **Review the reading and select the reading strategies you will use.** While there may be many strategies you would actually use, you should try to limit the number you focus on to two or three. Explain the strategies and why they are useful so that learners can more easily identify them when they hear or see them used.
2. **Set the purpose for reading and be clear about it with learners.** This is the first thing a good reader does, but many learners don't do this, especially if they've been assigned a reading. Setting the purpose will also help learners connect specific strategies with specific purposes for reading.
3. **Read the article and model the strategies you identified.** Model the strategies by stopping during the reading and thinking aloud. It's important to rehearse when you'll use the strategies and what you'll say, rather than demonstrating this “on the fly.” This will help you focus on the specific strategies and present them clearly. It is OK, even preferred, to demonstrate the thinking process as not perfect. For example, you may make predictions that are wrong. Just explain why you've made the error, how you recognized the error, and your correction. While you're doing the Think-Aloud technique, have learners follow along in the text and mark where you use different comprehension strategies.
4. **Identify the strategies and discuss how they were used.** Have learners identify where you used each strategy and why that strategy was useful. Ask learners if they can think of other things they've read where that strategy would be useful. Ask them to think of other strategies that you might have used.
5. **Have learners use the Think-Aloud technique to apply the same strategies.** You can do this many ways. You can have each learner read a portion of a passage and think aloud to the entire class. You can have learners work in pairs and think aloud to each other, while you go around the room and listen.

## Mind Map

A mind map is a graphic organizer that can be used to help learners comprehend what they read. It is sometimes called clustering, a brainstorming web, an idea map, or a concept map.

### Steps

1. Have learners read a story or an article. Briefly discuss with them what they just read to get them thinking about it.
2. Have a learner draw a circle in the middle of a piece of paper. Have the learner write a word or a couple of words to represent the main idea of the story.
3. Ask learners what else occurred in the story. Use questions about the people involved, location, cause and effect, and so forth. For each detail, have a learner write key words in a circle and connect that circle to the diagram where it logically belongs.
4. Have learners look back over the map and the story to see if they missed any details. If so, add them to the map.
5. Ask a learner to use the mind map to tell you what the story was about. Learners should be able to summarize the story or tell you the main idea and details of an article without referring back to the story or article.
6. It's a good idea to model the process of creating a mind map with learners before asking them to create a mind map on their own.
7. Beginning literacy or ESL learners may have difficulty with the writing. Discuss the story with them and use what they say to create a mind map on the chalkboard. Then ask the learners to copy what you have written and use that mind map to retell the story.

## Creating Independent Readers

This activity encourages learners to use a before-during-after questioning strategy outside of class to improve their comprehension while reading independently.

### Steps

1. Give learners three index cards. Label one card "Before I Read," another card "While I Read," and the third card "After I Read."
2. Write the following questions on the Before I Read card:
  - What is this going to be about?
  - What do I already know about the topic?
  - What's my purpose for reading this?
3. Write the following questions on the While I Read card:
  - What do I think the next part is going to be about?
  - Was I right or wrong?
  - What else do I want to know about this topic?
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4. Write the following questions on the After I Read card:
  - What did the article tell me?
  - What did I have to figure out?
  - What else do I want to know about this topic?
5. Practice using the cards with learners in class with you or with each other. When learners become comfortable with asking themselves these questions, encourage learners to use the cards outside of class when reading.