



Teaching Strategy

Click, Clunk

Description

Click, Clunk is a teaching/learning strategy that students use to signal comprehension difficulties to themselves and the teacher. Students simply read silently and then say “click” for each word they understand (and again for each sentence or passage) and “clunk” whenever they encounter a word, phrase, sentence or passage that they don’t fully understand.

Purpose

Research indicates that self-monitoring of comprehension and becoming aware of what it takes to make meaning can help students who have difficulty reading. Click, Clunk is a self-monitoring strategy that helps students pinpoint where comprehension breaks down so they can go back and try to “fix up” their lack of understanding. Used in a class with a group of students who quietly go click or clunk, the strategy signals teachers where students are getting stuck. Students can use the strategy on their own as well as they read silently – all they need to do is to mentally realize they have just run into a clunk. The strategy encourages students to think as they read. Combined with “fix up” strategies (rereading, using text aides such as graphics or pictures, drawing on your knowledge of the world or guessing meaning from context) gives them another tool to increase their reading comprehension.

What to Do

Select a reading passage that students need to understand and are likely to find a bit challenging. Use this passage with the class after you have modeled the strategy with a number of sentences that help students understand how to use the strategy.

1. On the board, write a couple of sentences that contain foreign words or nonsense words so that no one has an advantage (Last night I had *Kohlrouladen* for dinner and they were scrumptious.). For more proficient classes, write a short passage that has several words that none of the students are likely to know (Example: “Everyone has a cell phone these days. They are ubiquitous. Their use in movie theatres and restaurants is disconcerting.”).
2. Do a quick think-aloud, saying something like “Mhmm, Let me read this. There are several words here I don’t recognize. Let me try a new strategy, called Click, Clunk.”
3. Go through the sentence, saying “click” at the familiar words, and “clunk” at the unfamiliar words. Later on, use the strategy with sentences and paragraphs as well. Write a sentence containing a nonsense word on the board and have students try the strategy as a group. (Example: *Street racing is lawunful and very dangerous.*) Tell students that “clunks” are important signals that tell them that a word or a sentence doesn’t make sense to them. “Clunks” tell us when we should reread a sentence and what we should pay attention to.

4. To demonstrate passage clunks, write a text on the board that contains words that students know but that don't make sense in the context of the passage (Example: *The firemen rushed to the scene in their tricycles. At the scene of the fire, they pulled out the big houses from the truck and painted the house in the direction of the fire.* Ask students to try the strategy, explaining what to do one more time, if necessary. Move your finger under the words and ask students to say "click" or "clunk" after each word. Then stop after each sentence and ask "Is this sentence a "click" or a "clunk"?" Ask students to identify why some sentences are clunks (they don't make sense) and highlight that sometimes we may know all the words in a text, and we still can't make sense out of what we read. Sometimes the difficulty is due to lack of clarity on the part of the writer and other times it is lack of knowledge on the part of the reader.
5. Highlight the point of the strategy: Click, Clunk allows us to identify where we are having difficulties and it allows us to pinpoint what we don't understand. It is a signal to reread and think about a sentence or a text a bit more to try to figure out what the writer may have meant. The strategy also serves as a signal to identify difficult words and to highlight them so they can be looked up and studied.
6. After a break of a day or two, return to the strategy, using a somewhat difficult text that is related to what students are working on. Ask students to read silently, but verbalize the click, click, clunks to themselves and mark the clunks with a pencil. Walk around and observe students as they mark their pages but don't intervene. Ask students to work in pairs to compare their clunks and see if they can help each other. Encourage more proficient readers to help low level readers by highlighting the fix-up strategies they know about – not just simply to explain an unknown word or clarify a passage.
7. Bring back the entire class and debrief the "clunks". Include words, sentences, and passages. Ask students to re-read sentences with clunks to see if meaning can be clarified. If you have covered "comprehension fix up" strategies, repeat and reinforce them at this point. If not, start introducing them so you can turn "clunks" into "clicks".

Continue using the strategy anytime students indicate that a text is too difficult.

Keep in Mind

It takes students a while to feel comfortable with a new strategy, so stick with it. Identifying what you can and cannot understand is a key skill in reading comprehension so it's worth the effort to help students self-monitor.

You can also try this strategy for *listening comprehension*. Simply create (or have students create "Signal Cards" that say **Click** or **Clunk**. Present information orally to your class (using the same approach as above) and ask students to hold up the cards to indicate they understand or don't understand what you say. Pause after each sentence as a cue for them to signal and purposefully speak fast or use new words to "force" the use of the cards.

To simplify things, you can also use red or green coloured paper, with red indicating clunk or *I don't have a clue as to what that means* and green signaling *I understand, no problem*.