

Guided Reading

Step By Step Directions
For Conducting A
Guided Reading Lesson



By Sandi Reyes

Activate Prior Knowledge (2 – 15 minutes)

You must find out what your students know about the book topic. I consider this the **most important** step in the guided reading process. Unfortunately, it is also the one that is most often skipped over during a *time crunch*. To solve this problem, you may decide to make your guided reading lesson span over 2 days, with the first lesson dedicated solely to this step. *To assume that your students are familiar with the images and words that they will see in a book is to do a terrible disservice to them.*

Remember, each student comes to you with completely different backgrounds and varied experiences. Children who have never left Florida may have no idea what a sled is. Children from Indiana may have never seen an ocean or a sea shell. It is your job BEFORE placing a book in front of the students to make them familiar with the things they will encounter when reading the story.

The time required for this step will vary from text to text and from group to group. There are many times where the book topic may be simplistic and common enough to discuss it within 2 minutes. There are other times when more in depth activities will be required.

This can be accomplished in a variety of ways. To make this learning most meaningful, I suggest combining these ideas to reach each learner through his/her personal learning style. It is also proven that when lessons are taught through multi-sensory experiences, they are more likely to be internalized. Here are some ideas for *Activating Prior Knowledge*:

1. Use questioning and discussion techniques to find out what students already know. Confirm good ideas and correct misconceptions.

Example: When asked about which animals live in the forest, a child names a raccoon, squirrel, and zebra. You confirm the idea that a raccoon and a squirrel DO live in the forest, but a zebra lives elsewhere.

2. Use props and allow students to touch and experience items.

Example: When reading about “a day at the beach”, bring in a pail, shovel, sea shell, sand, etc. Be sure to discuss different names for items. If the “pail” is called a “bucket” in the book, be sure to talk to the students about both names.

3. Show students multiple pictures of an object so that they know an object with one name can have different looks.

Example: Students have an image of a “pig” as a cute little fat pig thing with a curly tail. But, not all pigs look like this. You may want to show pictures of pigs that are different colors, different sizes, with different kinds of tails. Many pot-bellied pigs, for example, are black with straight tails.

4. Make lists or graphic organizers.

Example: If working in a book that depicts different actions of people or animals, you could design a “t chart”. On one side write “Things I CAN do” and on the other side write “Things I CAN’T do”. Ask students to generate ideas of things they can do. They can demonstrate these actions for you. Suggest things like “jump”, “walk”, “run”, and “swim”. On the other side, you could list things they can’t do, like “fly”, “walk up a wall”, and “swing from tree to tree”.

Set the Stage (2 – 6 minutes)

Vocab and sight words

Now that you've activated prior knowledge or instilled the missing knowledge necessary for this book, it is time to *Set the Stage* for successful reading. This is a quick process in which you restate the vocabulary words the students will see in this book. Quickly review the previous lesson, focusing specifically on the vocabulary in the book.

The second part of this step is to review or introduce sight words that will be found in the story. In order to support fluent reading, students cannot get hung up on basic sight words. You must know ahead of time which sight words are in the book. If the words have already learned, simply use flashcards to review them. For new words, make a quick introduction with flashcards and have students build the word with letter cards, tiles, or magnetic letters. Take away the card and ask students to write the word on a dry erase board. This will give them enough familiarity with the word to aid in reading. You can do more focus work to reinforce these new sight words later.

Introduce the Book (2 minutes)

Now it is time to *Introduce the Book*. This is where you will reinforce some basic *Concepts of Print*. Hold up the book and read the title to the students, pointing to each word as you say it. Pass out a book to each student, but instruct them NOT to open it yet. Tell the students to point to the title and then to the author/illustrator. Ask the children to read the title to you, pointing to each word as they read. Next, tell the children to turn to the Title Page. Once on the title page, the students should read the title again, pointing to each word as they go.

**Note: For higher level books (above Level C), it is not necessary for students to point to each word. At this stage, it may actually hinder their fluency to do so.*

Picture Walk (3-4 minutes)

In this step, you will walk the students quickly through the book, looking only at the pictures, NOT THE WORDS. It is very difficult to keep the children from trying to read the words. To aid in this, you can ask students to cover up the words with their hands or a special “word cover” that you create. Bookmarks or pieces of construction paper work well for this. You can also cover up the words ahead of time with white book tape. If using a black-line book, you can create wordless books by cutting the words off the page. Use the wordless books for the picture walk and then switch them out for the “real” book later.

During the picture walk, you continue to develop vocabulary and verbal skills by simply asking the students, “What do you see in this picture?” or “What is happening in this picture?” The trick here is to use the words that are actually on that page. When responding to students, you MUST respond as closely to the written words as possible. In doing this, you are planting the seed for later reading.

Example: The picture shows a female adult in the kitchen making breakfast. And, the words on the page say, “Mom is cooking.”

You ask, “What is happening in this picture?”

Student responds, “She is making eggs for breakfast.”

You respond, “That’s right. Mom is cooking.”

First Read (4 minutes)

It is time to release the power to the students and ask them to read the book. Uncover all the words and turn back to the cover of the book. Individually the students will read the book at their own speeds. You must learn to listen to each one separately and be prepared to step in and help when someone gets stuck. Listen also for children who “race” through it and encourage them to slow down. Be sure that you are NOT asking students to choral read. Each student needs to read independently for you to assess and support properly.

During this time, you are there to scaffold each learner. When someone hesitates, be sure to give him/her time to figure it out. If necessary, prompt the student to think about good reading strategies that you’ve taught. When the student still can’t move on, you may suggest a strategy to try. When all else fails, tell the word so that the reader may go on. Remember that when a “tricky” word has been figured out, the reader should go back to the beginning of the sentence and reread the entire thing for fluency and continuity.

A trick that many students try during this first read is to skip the words they don’t know and just hope that you don’t notice! Be aware of this and watch for it. If you feel that a student may have done this, ask him/her to go back and read the page again while you listen.

Read For Fluency (2-3 minutes)

Students should always be instructed to read the story at least 3 times. Research shows that **3** is the “magic number”. Students begin to show fluency on the third read. Again, watch for “speed readers”. Boys especially think that fluent reading means reading it the fastest. Explain that fluent reading means to read at a normal speaking pace and with expression and feeling. It is during these re-reads that you can encourage the addition of expressive reading.

By asking students to read at least 3 times, you are give your faster readers something to do while you continue to scaffold your more struggling readers. It is also during this time that I remind students to be sure they are reading each word and noticing details in each picture because I will be checking for comprehension shortly.

After Reading (10 minutes)

Questioning for comprehension (Bloom's taxonomy)

Once the book is read, it is truly important to be sure that students understood what they read. Use questioning techniques to check for comprehension. To assess the breadth of understanding, you must be sure to question on multiple levels. This helps again to differentiate the instruction as well as to encourage higher level thinking for all. The easiest way to make sure you are questioning on all levels is to refer to Bloom's Taxonomy, as shown below.

From Bloom, et al., 1956

As teachers we tend to ask questions in the "knowledge" category 80% to 90% of the time. These questions are not bad, but using them all the time is. Try to utilize higher order level of questions. These questions require much more "brain power" and a more extensive and elaborate answer. Below are the six question categories as defined by Bloom.

- **KNOWLEDGE**
 - remembering;
 - memorizing;
 - recognizing;
 - recalling identification and
 - recall of information
 - Who, what, when, where, how ...?
 - Describe
- **COMPREHENSION**
 - interpreting;
 - translating from one medium to another;
 - describing in one's own words;
 - organization and selection of facts and ideas
 - Retell...
- **APPLICATION**
 - problem solving;

- applying information to produce some result;
- use of facts, rules and principles
 - How is...an example of...?
 - How is...related to...?
 - Why is...significant?
- **ANALYSIS**
 - subdividing something to show how it is put together;
 - finding the underlying structure of a communication;
 - identifying motives;
 - separation of a whole into component parts
 - What are the parts or features of...?
 - Classify...according to...
 - Outline/diagram...
 - How does...compare/contrast with...?
 - What evidence can you list for...?
- **SYNTHESIS**
 - creating a unique, original product that may be in verbal form or may be a physical object;
 - combination of ideas to form a new whole
 - What would you predict/infer from...?
 - What ideas can you add to...?
 - How would you create/design a new...?
 - What might happen if you combined...?
 - What solutions would you suggest for...?
- **EVALUATION**
 - making value decisions about issues;
 - resolving controversies or differences of opinion;
 - development of opinions, judgments or decisions
 - Do you agree...?
 - What do you think about...?
 - What is the most important...?
 - Place the following in order of priority...
 - How would you decide about...?
 - What criteria would you use to assess...?