

Paragraph Shrinking

Paragraph shrinking is an activity developed as part of the Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS). The paragraph shrinking strategy allows each student to take turns reading, pausing, and summarizing the main points of each paragraph. Students provide each other with feedback as a way to monitor comprehension.

Why use paragraph shrinking?

- It helps students develop their reading comprehension skills.
- It allows each student to take turns reading, pausing, and summarizing the main points of each paragraph.

When to use: During reading and/or After reading

How to use: Individually, With small groups, and/or Whole class setting

Note: Paragraph shrinking was developed as one of the Peer Assisted Learning Strategies at the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Research on Human Development. Because of that, the directions below describe a procedure where students work with a peer to complete the strategy.

How to use paragraph shrinking

1. Choose the assigned reading and introduce the text to the students.
2. Create pairs within the classroom by identifying which children require help on specific skills and who the most appropriate children are to help other children learn those skills.
3. Model the procedure to ensure that students understand how to use the strategy.
4. Have each member of the teacher-assigned pair take turns being "Coach" and "Player."
5. Ask each student to read aloud for 5 minutes without rereading a text. After each paragraph, students should stop to summarize the main points of the reading. Ask students to then summarize the following information:
 - The who or what of the paragraph
 - The most important thing about who or what
 - The main idea

Note: If a "Player" ever gives a wrong answer, the "Coach" asks the "Player" to skim the paragraph again and answer question a second time.

6. Ask students to state the main idea in 10 words or less which will encourage them to monitor comprehension while taking turns reading.
7. Award each pair points when the above goals of the strategy are met.

[Click here](#) for a concise routine for teaching paragraph summarization.

Download a blank template

- [Paragraph shrinking cards](#) (162K PDF)

Differentiated instruction

for second language learners, students of varying reading skill, and younger learners

- Have students work together to write out the main points of the reading.
- Change the pairs regularly so that all students have the opportunity to be "coaches" and "players."
- Monitor and support students as they work together.

See the research that supports this strategy

Fuchs, D., Fuchs, L., & Burish, P. (2000). Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies: An Evidence-Based Practice to Promote Reading Achievement. *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice*, 15(2), 85-91.

Fuchs, L., Fuchs, D., & Kazdan, S. (1999). Effects of peer-assisted learning strategies on high school students with serious reading problems. *Remedial and Special Education*, 20(5), 309-318.

Saenz, L., Fuchs, L., & Fuchs, D. (2005) Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies for English Language Learners with Learning Disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, (71).

Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Research on Human Development. (n.d.). Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies. Retrieved 2008, January 21, from <http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/pals/>

http://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/paragraph_shrinking



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Classroom Strategy: Paragraph Shrinking

Background

Paragraph Shrinking is an activity developed as part of the *Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS)*. PALS is a classwide peer tutoring program in which teachers carefully partner a student with a classmate. The Paragraph Shrinking strategy allows each student to take turns reading, pausing, and summarizing the main points of each paragraph. Students provide each other with feedback as a way to monitor comprehension.

Benefits

Paragraph Shrinking does not require special reading materials and consequently enables teachers to use the reading material of their choice. This offers teachers flexibility for incorporating the strategy into various content areas. Paragraph Shrinking provides direct opportunities for a teacher to circulate in the class, observe students, and offer individual remediation.

Create and use the strategy

Choose the assigned reading and introduce the text to the students. Then create pairs within the classroom by identifying which children require help on specific skills and who the most appropriate children are to help other children learn those skills. Model the activity to ensure that students understand how to use the strategy.

During this process teachers should:

1. Each member of the teacher-assigned pair takes turns being "Coach" and "Player." These pairs are changed regularly. All students have the opportunity to be "coaches" and "players."

Note: It is important for teachers to monitor and support students as they work together.

2. Each student reads aloud for five minutes without rereading a text. After each paragraph, students stop to summarize the main points of the reading. Students are asked to summarize the following information:

- the who or what of the paragraph;
- the most important thing about who or what; and
- the main idea

If a "Player" ever gives a wrong answer, the "Coach" asks the "Player" to skim the paragraph again and answer question a second time. Students must state the main idea in ten words or less which encourages them to monitor comprehension while taking turns reading. The pair earns points when the above goals of the strategy are met.

Further reading

Video:

