

What Is Reciprocal Teaching?

The creation of Palinscar and Brown, Reciprocal Teaching is in some ways a compilation of four comprehension strategies:

- summarizing
- questioning
- clarifying
- predicting

Please understand that some think the choice of "reciprocal" in the name of this strategy is slightly misleading. It conjures up the image of a student in front of the class, or of students taking turns telling each other important ideas in the text. Instead, the strategy is best at seeking to promote comprehension by tackling the ideas in a text on several fronts.

How Does It Work?

The order in which the four stages occur is not crucial; you'll want to try out different versions of the strategy to see if a particular protocol suits your teaching style, and your students' learning styles, better. You will also want to choose text selections carefully to be certain that they lend themselves to all four stages of reciprocal teaching.

How Might I Implement Reciprocal Teaching in my Classroom?

Before you can expect reciprocal teaching to be used successfully by your students, they need to have been taught and had time to practice the four strategies that are used in reciprocal teaching. Doesn't it make sense that they should already have learned and become comfortable with summarizing before attempting to use it in a reciprocal teaching situation? Or questioning? Or predicting? Or clarifying?

One approach to teaching reciprocal teaching might be to have students work from a four-column chart, with each column headed by the different comprehension activity involved.

You might also consider implementing reciprocal teaching the way Donna Dyer of the North West Regional Education Service Agency in North Carolina recommends. Here's one way she suggests you use reciprocal teaching:

1. Put students in groups of four.
2. Distribute one notecard to each member of the group identifying each person's unique role.
 - a. summarizer
 - b. questioner
 - c. clarifier
 - d. predictor
3. Have students read a few paragraphs of the assigned text selection. Encourage them to use note-taking strategies such as selective underlining or sticky-notes to help them better prepare for their role in the discussion.
4. At the given stopping point, the Summarizer will highlight the key ideas up to this point in the reading.
5. The Questioner will then pose questions about the selection:

- unclear parts
 - puzzling information
 - connections to other concepts already learned
 - motivations of the agents or actors or characters
 - etc.
6. The Clarifier will address confusing parts and attempt to answer the questions that were just posed.
 7. The Predictor can offer guesses about what the author will tell the group next or, if it's a literary selection, the predictor might suggest what the next events in the story will be.
 8. The roles in the group then switch one person to the right, and the next selection is read. Students repeat the process using their new roles. This continues until the entire selection is read.

Taken from <http://www.readingquest.org/strat/rt.html>

November 9, 2006