



Foundation Paper Supporting Special Education Students with *ReadAbout*

ReadAbout is a supplemental reading program that uses adaptive technology to focus on the three key components of reading achievement in grades 3-8: comprehension skills and strategies, vocabulary, and content-area knowledge.

OVERVIEW OF THE *READ ABOUT*

Students using *ReadAbout* receive direct instruction and practice in the comprehension skills and strategies crucial to extracting meaning from nonfiction texts. *ReadAbout* presents a rigorous yet motivating approach to vocabulary instruction, in which students learn grade-appropriate academic and content-area words. Throughout the program, students build background knowledge in the content areas. Background knowledge helps students create mental models to facilitate cross-curricular academic success.

The *ReadAbout* software differentiates instruction for every student and collects data for continuous assessment and further data-driven instruction in the classroom. Using *ReadAbout* reports, teachers can prescribe additional instruction and practice for individuals and small groups in comprehension skills and vocabulary. Student print materials include leveled reading cards that are directly linked to each of the 70 topics in the software. The cards are designed to promote transference of skills by building upon students' newly acquired comprehension skills, vocabulary, and content-area knowledge.

Each *ReadAbout* topic provides multiple opportunities to write in response to text both in the software and in supplemental print materials. Responding to text in both expository and narrative formats deepens students' comprehension of text.


It is recommended that students work independently on the *ReadAbout* software a minimum of twice a week and with the print materials at least once a week. The program is designed to supplement any existing core reading program easily and flexibly.

RESEARCH FOUNDATION

ReadAbout draws on a foundation of research in eight topics:

1. **Reading Comprehension for Expository Text:** Pressley (2001) found that instruction aimed at increasing comprehension abilities should be focused on "improving word-level competencies, building background knowledge, and promoting the use of comprehension strategies." In *ReadAbout*, students receive explicit instruction in ten comprehension skills: author's purpose, cause and effect, compare and contrast, draw conclusions, fact and opinion, main idea and details, make inferences, problem and solution, sequence of events, and summarize.
2. **Differentiated Instruction:** Research has found that technology can provide a customized technology experience responsive to individual student's learning needs (Meyer and Rose, 1998; Rose, Meyer, and Hitchcock, 2005). *ReadAbout* evaluates students' progress and continually adjusts to find text at the students' Lexile level.
3. **Vocabulary Instruction:** Explicit teaching of vocabulary words has been shown to accelerate comprehension of texts (Beck, Omanson, & McKeown, 1982; Pearson, Hansen, & Gordon, 1979). Successful vocabulary programs also present new words repeatedly in different contexts. *ReadAbout* teaches academic and content-area words through research-based routines based upon Feldman and Kinsella's (2005) *Sequence of Pronounce, Explain, Provide Examples, Elaborate, and Assess*. Students receive multiple exposures to new vocabulary words as they progress through a topic.

4. **Anchored Instruction:** Research indicated that activating students' prior knowledge is important for understanding expository text (Beck, Omanson, & McKeown, 1982; Pearson, Hansen, & Gordon, 1979). In *ReadAbout*, before students read, they watch as Skill Brief, a high-interest, 40- to 60-second Anchor Video, builds the background knowledge needed to make meaning from text.
5. **Modeling Comprehension Strategies:** Research shows that using reading strategies helps students master expository text (Saul and Dieckman, 2005). *ReadAbout* teaches students strategies such as asking questions before, during, and after reading; creating mental images; determining main ideas; monitoring comprehension throughout; repairing comprehension when needed; drawing inferences; and synthesizing information.
6. **Motivation:** Research shows that motivation is strongly related to reading achievement (Guthrie, 2001). *ReadAbout* motivates and challenges students with high-interest reading choices, engaging video clips, corrective feedback, and a unique digital reward system.
7. **Continuous Assessment:** Researchers have found that providing clear goals and feedback for reading tasks can help students develop strategies for understanding expository text (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). *ReadAbout* software continuously provides corrective feedback and monitors students' understanding of comprehension, vocabulary, and content knowledge.
8. **Writing to Encourage Reading Comprehension:** Teaching students to use organizational structures such as topic sentences and transition words helps them understand, connect, and remember concepts while reading (Culham, 2003). The *ReadAbout* software has students respond to short writing prompts that focus students' attention on organizational structures as they read.

 The Research Foundation Paper, *ReadAbout: A Summary of Research*, provides specific information regarding the research foundation for the program. A copy may be downloaded at www.Scholastic.com/ReadAbout.

UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING (UDL)

The Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) has defined three facets of content to support the Universal Design Principles for Learning (UDL). *ReadAbout* addresses each:

1. *Multiple Means of Representation*, to provide students a variety of ways to learn.
ReadAbout's multisensory approach includes interactive software with digital, audio and visual support, as well as printed text and teacher-led instruction to offer multiple access points for students. Far-below-level readers receive extra scaffolding and practice through multiple exposures to words, leveled text and coaching in the tutorial areas of the program. Students benefit from anchored instruction, rereading, repairing, and other strategies that help them improve their comprehension and vocabulary skills. Students with disabilities benefit from closed-captioned anchor videos, text and voice-over support, and read aloud options with phrase-by-phrase highlighting for all passages.
2. *Multiple Means of Expression*, to offer students alternatives to show what they know.
ReadAbout includes software and print opportunities for students to show what they know. Teachers are provided with specific strategies for helping students in the Data-Driven Instructional Planner. The software also provides multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate their knowledge of skills and strategies for each topic.
3. *Multiple Means of Engagement*, to motivate and challenge students appropriately.
ReadAbout varies the level of instructional challenge and support according to the learning needs of each individual student. Nonfiction choices are based on a student's reading level, skill need, and grade level. The program is self-managed and leveled to provide the appropriate challenge and motivation for each student whether they need intensive intervention or acceleration.

EXPLICIT, SCAFFOLDED INSTRUCTION

ReadAbout's embedded instructional sequence is designed to assist and motivate every student in a classroom—from students struggling with basic reading comprehension skills to those who have excelled beyond grade level. Each step in the sequence provides instruction, practice, remediation, or challenge in comprehension skills and strategies, vocabulary, and content-area knowledge. The five steps in *ReadAbout's* embedded instructional sequence are:

Before Reading

Anchored Instruction: *ReadAbout* prepares students to learn by anchoring instruction and building mental models. Before students begin reading, *ReadAbout* pre-teaches vocabulary, frontloads comprehension instruction with skill videos, and builds background knowledge with content-related videos.

During Reading

Scaffolded Reading: *ReadAbout* customizes reading instruction by delivering high-interest, leveled, nonfiction content. The program also ensures multiple exposures to high-utility vocabulary, offers extensive contextual supports, and provides explicit instruction in the skills and strategies each student needs to learn.

After Reading

Informative Assessment: *ReadAbout* assesses students on vocabulary performance and knowledge of the ten nonfiction comprehension skills. Targeted corrective feedback provides further instruction when difficulty arises, along with the opportunity to try again. Every keystroke is collected by the program and not only informs the adaptive algorithm, but also allows extensive reporting. Teachers and administrators can access collected data in the *ReadAbout* reports.

Personalized Practice: *ReadAbout* provides students with the opportunity to practice vocabulary through dynamic instructional activities and a personalized collection of vocabulary cards. It also offers further on-level practice with comprehension skills, as well as topic-specific writing activities.

Adaptive Intervention: *ReadAbout* software adapts to stay on pace with students by delivering reading passages at a higher or a lower level, according to need; delivering vocabulary review as needed; and engaging students in tutorials on comprehension skills if performance shows that it is necessary. Dynamic scaffolds adjust passage text level based on student performance.

ASSESSMENT

ReadAbout continuously assesses students by using a variety of instruments. Students begin by taking the *Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI)* to assess their reading levels and determine if placement in the program is appropriate. A research-based assessment, the *SRI* and its Lexile Framework have been the subject of seven validation studies. The research ranges from a normative study with a sample of 512,224 students (Lexile Framework) to an analysis of gender, race, and ethnic differences among fourth-through ninth-grade students (*SRI*).

Students are also assessed through the *ReadAbout* software. Skills assessment begins with the “Comprehension Quick Check” at the beginning of each passage. Assessment continues with multiple-choice, graphic organizer, and highlighter questions at the end of each passage. Finally students are assessed in the “Challenge Area” at the end of all three passages in the topic.

The *Scholastic Achievement Manager (SAM)*, which collects data from *SRI* assessments and *ReadAbout* software use, generates 38 detailed reports that provide:

- District- and school-wide overviews of student participation and performance on the program.
- A variety of progress monitoring reports detailing student skill performance, text level reading performance, and vocabulary acquisition.

- Comprehensive information on student topic experience, including topic exposure, topic frequency, and topic completion.
- Information that helps teachers differentiate instruction, including how to group students for intervention in such areas as skill performance and text level.
- Alerts and acknowledgments that provide important information on student success, potential problems, and weekly progress.
- District- and school-wide overviews of student participation and performance in the program.
- A number of reports that foster the school-to-home connection, including reports to parents and vocabulary reports students and caregivers can use together.

PROGRESS MONITORING

ReadAbout assesses students on vocabulary performance and knowledge of ten nonfiction comprehension skills after students read each passage. Every keystroke is collected by the program and not only informs the adaptive algorithm, but also allows extensive reporting. Ongoing, real-time reporting on student performance on the *ReadAbout* software and *SRI* is available to teachers and administrators through the *Scholastic Achievement Manager (SAM)*.

Using *SAM*, teachers can generate detailed progress monitoring, instructional planning, and management reports, as well as alerts and parent letters, that track reading and vocabulary progress for individual students, groups, and classes. Teachers can then use the data from the reports to inform and target their instruction in order to meet all their students' diverse needs.

ReadAbout reports include:

- **Skills Performance Report**—shows each *ReadAbout* skill and a student's corresponding skill score.
- **Profile Report**—provides a detailed overview of each student's performance in *ReadAbout*, including each student's latest content-knowledge, comprehension, and vocabulary scores.
- **Intervention Grouping Report**—analyzes student skill performance and identifies students who are performing below a 75% benchmark in a given skill, indicating that students are in need of additional support.
- **Skills Progress Report**—reviews performance by skill and reading level for individual students.
- **Differentiated Instruction Report**—shows how students are given topics at easier or harder text levels, along with accompanying skill instruction and assessment, based on their performance.
- **Student Vocabulary Report**—displays the students' current vocabulary score.
- **Student Knowledge Report**—tracks students' content-area exposure and performance on vocabulary and comprehension assessments.

Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) reports include:

- **Growth Report**—measures reading progress during a specific time period by comparing students' scores for any two testing sessions.
- **Student Yearly Progress Indicator Report**—compares the student's *SRI* reading performance over time against the grade-level proficiency range.
- **Yearly Progress Indicator Report**—displays how students within a group, class, or grade are performing compared to their grade-level proficiency range.
- **Student Progress Report**—shows a student's scores on multiple *SRI* tests.
- **Proficiency Summary Report**—presents the reading performance of students within a district, school, or for an individual teacher, class, or group.

MOTIVATION & ENGAGEMENT

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivational strategies are incorporated through the design of *ReadAbout*. These strategies are designed to create a passion for learning.

- The *ReadAbout* software uses a range of intrinsic and extrinsic interactive instructional activities, such as card collecting, quizzes, and word challenges that reward students with stars and increase in rank to encourage success and to motivate them as they learn.

- *ReadAbout* prompts students to choose the nonfiction topic that most interests them from three highly engaging topics written at their level.
- Students are provided with multiple opportunities to develop and master skills at their reading levels, while receiving continuous feedback on their progress throughout the software and in reports.
- When students complete a topic, they are given a choice of three new topics that are aligned to their reading level and particular skills needs. Students may select the topic that they are most interested in learning about.
- Incorrect answers are treated as teaching moments during and after reading. Students receive supportive, corrective feedback that explains why an answer was incorrect and directs them to reread and find the correct answer in the text.
- *ReadAbout's* technology provides a colorful, engaging, and friendly environment for learning.
- The *ReadAbout* reading cards include a Featured Career, which encourages students to understand real-world occupations in which they are interested, making reading more personally relevant.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ReadAbout presents a customizable training and professional development plan to ensure the effectiveness of the program. It includes:

- In-person implementation training for *ReadAbout* teachers
- A facilitated, online professional development course from *Scholastic RED*
- *The Know About ReadAbout Guide* which ties scientifically based reading research to *ReadAbout's* instruction. It provides teachers with strategies to translate theory into practice using the program's software, lesson plans, and assessment data.
- *Topic Planners* that show how the curriculum aligns to standards, present successful strategies for teaching English language learners, and provide instruction for building students' vocabulary, comprehension, and writing skills.
- *Assessment, Reports, and Differentiated Instruction Guide* that explains how to effectively use assessment data from the *ReadAbout* reports and provides lessons that teachers can use to differentiate comprehension instruction.

The *ReadAbout* Implementation training exposes *ReadAbout* teachers to the program's background and research, engages them in the student experience through a software simulator, explores program components, supports the development of an instructional plan tailored to their school and classroom context, offers practice using the *Scholastic Achievement Manager system (SAM)*, explains the use of the many reports available through SAM, and informs them about other professional development opportunities with Scholastic RED and the Professional Development Video workshops.

ReadAbout includes enrollment in the Scholastic *RED* online course *ReadAbout: Improving Nonfiction Reading Comprehension*. The course focuses on proven, scientifically based teaching strategies and methods to help raise student reading achievement. Through 24-hour access to online resources and training, teachers can participate in interactive simulations and watch videos that show master practitioners modeling research-based practices in real classrooms. While the course presents numerous topics to help students become better nonfiction readers, it integrates topics within the context of the *ReadAbout* curriculum and materials.

The course topics include:

- Teaching students to become nonfiction readers
- Getting started with *ReadAbout*
- Developing active and strategic readers
- Teaching academic vocabulary
- Building content-area knowledge
- Writing in the service of nonfiction reading