

# Comprehension

Many English-speaking adults can read a piece of text written in a Romance or Germanic language; we could probably say the words on the page with some accuracy. That would be utterly pointless, however, as we are unlikely to understand much of what we ‘read.’

One of the biggest barriers to becoming a great reader is mistaking decoding for reading. Decoding is pronouncing words accurately, and it’s one of the skills needed. Of course, it would be impossible to read without knowing how letters and sounds work together, but **decoding is not reading**. There are often times when parents, teachers, and teacher-aides - thinking they’re doing the right thing - insist on students sounding out words as the first line of attack.

To be clear, knowing how sounds and letters combine is essential - but it’s not the only skill that students need to be successful and confident readers.

**Decoding is important. Comprehension is the reason we read.**

From the beginning, reading must be comprehension-focused, or it’s a waste of everyone’s time. Students who keep comprehension central to their learning are more engaged than those who are just learning rules by rote and, in the long run, they’re faster to learn and coordinate all the skills.

This mini book is based on this premise. **Comprehension leads because without understanding we’re just saying the words on the page.**

Having said that, we need to start with some letters that represent some sounds. Writing in history came before reading, so it is - in a way - that we have nothing to read unless we first write.