

# WHAT'S A "CLUNK" ?

Metacognition means having an awareness of what's happening in your head when you attempt to learn—knowing if you are “getting it” and if you are not, knowing what to do to fix it. All readers, no matter how well or poorly they read, have some materials they can understand pretty well (a novel, a magazine, the comics, baseball stats, a picture book). They can clickity-click across the pages easily. On the other hand, most readers have some materials with which they have difficulty, the clickity-click turns to a CLUNK. What kinds of “CLUNKS” do you run into with your reading?

**Discuss “Clickity-clicks” with your students.** Start by discussing reading materials you find easy to understand (the clickity-clicks). Tell your students why these are easy for you—you have lots of background knowledge, they are enjoyable to you, illustrations or graphics are helpful, etc. Have your students share materials that are easy for them to read and have them explain why.

**Discuss “CLUNKS” with your students.** Next, discuss materials you find difficult (CLUNKS) and let the students know why. Sometimes CLUNKS are physical in nature, that is, the print is too small, the color of the type is too light or bright, or the font is too ornate. Other times CLUNKS are due to the reader’s poor background knowledge or his lack of purpose or interest. Some CLUNKS are due to the quality of the reading materials—the vocabulary is too difficult for the reader, there are too many details and the main ideas are not explicit, the graphics are confusing. Have your students share difficult reading materials and WHY they are difficult.

Once students have identified the CLUNKS, they need to have strategies for overcoming them. Here is a list of “Fix up” strategies you can share with your students. Post these in your classroom and have students add to the list if they discover some other strategies.

## Fix-up Strategies

1. **Slow Down.** Change your reading rate. Textbook information may be difficult to understand. Therefore, expect that your reading rate will be slower than when you read a story.
2. **Continue Reading** to see if the author explains the “CLUNK.” Your CLUNK could be a word or an idea. Look for context clues.
3. **Reread.** Sometimes a paragraph or a page makes more sense the second or third time you read it.
4. **Use maps, charts, graphs, or any other aids** the author may give you.
5. **Use the glossary** in the textbook or a dictionary.
6. **Use the appendix or other special features** in the textbook.
7. **Ask** another student, if permitted. Sometimes talking it out, straightens it out.
8. **Ask** your teacher to help you “fix up” the CLUNK.

## PROCESS FOR SUCCESSFUL, METACOGNITIVE READERS

1. Survey the reading selection to determine the topic. Look at headings, subheadings, visuals, and graphics.  
*(Author’s Craft)*
2. Think about what you already know. *(Background Knowledge)*
3. Determine a purpose for reading. Establish some questions you want to answer. *(Set a Purpose)*
4. Keep your purpose in mind as you read and monitor your understanding. *(Active Reading)*
5. If you hit a CLUNK, stop reading and plan your next move. Try one of your fix-up strategies. *(Metacognition)*
6. Did your fix-up strategy work? If yes, you are on your way! If no, go back to #5 and pick another fix-up strategy. *(Metacognition)*

*Notice how the CRISS learning principles fit into the successful reader’s plan!!!*

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