

SEVEN WAYS AUDIOBOOKS HELP STRUGGLING READERS



Audiobooks help level the playing field for struggling readers

When students in grades 3–12 read below grade level, they lose ground rapidly. And once they fall behind it's difficult for them to catch up. Providing access to human-read audiobooks supports reading skill development and levels the playing field for struggling readers. **Here are seven reasons why audiobooks are a game-changer.**

1 Moving from decoding to comprehension

When students are offered the opportunity to have audiobooks in the classroom, their world can finally open up. Having books read aloud helps these struggling readers move beyond decoding right into learning. The more words they learn and incorporate into their knowledge base, the better equipped they will be to access grade-level materials.

2 Building background knowledge

Human-read audiobooks expose students to academic vocabulary and the language of books. This exposure helps build their background knowledge, an essential component of learning, especially for a struggling reader. The ability to build background knowledge quickly through audiobooks cannot be underestimated.

3 Reducing working-memory deficit

Students who struggle with decoding and the mechanics of reading spend so much time sounding out the words that it is difficult for them to retain the information they are reading. By eliminating the focus on decoding, they are better able to understand, absorb and retain content.

When students read audiobooks, they start building their working memory. Building working memory helps make other reading tasks easier and improves reading ability. This makes for more confident readers and promotes independent reading.

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4 Eliminating printed word decoding anxiety

Once the pressure to read the written word is gone, students are more open to learning. Audiobooks allow students to be immersed in the meaning of text. They also remove the lag time of decoding, which becomes increasingly important as texts become more rigorous. Anxiety is a daily occurrence for struggling readers, so the regular use of audiobooks can actually make school much more enjoyable.

5 Increasing reading comprehension

When students hear literature, popular fiction or textbooks read by a human narrator, their comprehension increases. Reading books word by word doesn't help create a whole experience. When struggling readers can finally put all the pieces of information together in one sitting, they begin to make meaning of text.

6 Developing appropriate grade-level knowledge

If students are only allowed to read materials at their reading level, they lose out. They miss opportunities to gain access to content that meets their intellectual capabilities. This is not only frustrating and emotionally stressful, it limits their learning experiences.

Giving students access to grade-level materials by providing an audiobook accommodation improves their self-esteem and increases their participation in class discussions. They are able to work alongside their peers and make much more efficient use of their time.

7 Giving students greater independence

With audiobooks, students are able to read independently. This gives them the confidence to become successful learners and play a greater role in the educational process. Students who are given the audiobook advantage also have more continuity in the classroom. This means peer relationships can develop normally, and students can feel more accepted.

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