

# Active Ingredients in Reading Intervention: Intentionality with Learning Strategies

---

## Article

Peng, P., Wang, W., Filderman, M. J., Zhang, W., & Lin, L. (2023). The active ingredient in reading comprehension strategy intervention for struggling readers: A Bayesian network meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 93(3), 352–390.  
<https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543231159778>

## What did they do?

Researchers wanted to know whether there was a single comprehension strategy, or combination of strategies, that would be most helpful to teach to students with reading difficulties in 3rd through 12th grades. They also wondered if students that learned more comprehension strategies got better at reading, and if there were other factors that influenced how students respond to strategy instruction. To do this, they examined 52 studies and analyzed their results.

## What did they find?

They did not find that one strategy was most impactful, but they did find evidence that a combination of main idea, retelling, and text structure were the most effective. However, without instruction on background knowledge, they did not find that any strategy or combination of strategies was important. Additionally, more strategies were not necessarily better, as students did not improve their comprehension when taught more strategies.

## What could this mean for teachers?

This paper is a good reminder that learning strategies can be cognitively demanding for students, so it is crucial to be thoughtful about which ones we teach. Retelling, main idea, and using the text's structure are likely to be worth the effort. However, the authors urge teachers to not only teach these strategies. After all, a student may need to use other tools, such as inferring or using a graphic organizer, in order to do something like retell a story or state the main idea of an article. Finally, remember that strategies are used to limit the cognitive load of reading comprehension. If we are not also providing our students with background knowledge, the cognitive load will be so great that no strategy will help them to make sense of text.

