

Teaching Sequencing: A Step-By-Step Process for K-2 Students

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Objective: Teaching sequencing as a step toward complete comprehension of a text.

Teaching sequencing can lead to the integration of a variety of curriculum areas. Children who have a significant understanding of how to sequence events often have a more concrete knowledge base for other basic comprehension skills. Teaching sequencing as a step toward complete comprehension of a text is the focus of the following instruction.

The first step to teaching sequencing in the K-2 area is to link the process with real literature. After reading a pre-selected book to the class, I present them with picture cards that depict key events in the story (usually 6-7 cards). The students are chosen at random to receive a card and they work together to put their picture cards in order as they remember the events from the story. Once they have agreed on the event sequence, they turn to the class and the students agree or disagree on the sequence. This allows not only the students who were chosen to participate to be actively engaged, but it also allows the entire class to verbalize their understanding of the storyline. This is an excellent informal assessment tool for comprehension of a given piece of literature. Through the participation assessment and the responses from the class as a whole, I then determine whether or not we need to reread the story, shuffle the cards and do it again, or proceed with the next step in sequencing activities.

Once the children have mastered the storyline using picture cards, we then move to key sentences from the book. I use pre-made sentence strips with actual sentences from the book that have the most impact on the important events in the story. The sentence strips are displayed in a hanging chart in random order. I read the sentences to the students as a group. I then ask students to volunteer to come up to the chart and move one sentence strip at a time so that they can be read in the proper order. Once the sentence strips have all been placed, we read the story again in order using the chart. If a sentence is out of order, we then refer to the book and correct any misplacement. This again is another form of informal assessment that can be easily used to determine the comprehension and sequencing abilities of your students. When working with students who are in need of remediation in reading and/or sequencing, drawing pictures that go with the sentences can offer them a picture clue, much like they would use when decoding unknown words in a text.

My next step in teaching sequencing is focused on a simple beginning, middle and end chart. On this chart, we simply write in the main events that come at the beginning, middle and end of a story that was read to the class. We practice condensing storylines into three main events. This is done so that the children

will learn that authors will often write stories in this manner and help them to clue into the most important parts of a story when reading for comprehension. This three-box chart can be used in small groups or in whole-group discussions. Depending on how it is used, it can be a formal or informal assessment tool on sequencing events. To use this three-block chart as a formal assessment, the teacher can have the children write or draw the three main events of a book that is read, but not discussed, with the class. Informally, the teacher can assess the students as they offer responses to the questions that will provide adequate responses to complete the chart.

After mastery of the basic three-block beginning, middle and end chart, I then move on to teaching sequencing using a flow map. The flow map offers unlimited boxes that move in sequential order throughout the storyline. Due to the fact that the children are not limited to a number of boxes, as they are in the three-box chart, they can add all of the events that they can remember to a flow map. This can provide the teacher with a clear view of comprehension skills at a much higher level of understanding. When introducing the flow map, I generally use an event that happens daily in class, such as taking up homework or going to lunch. This provides children with the opportunity to participate because the event is well known and easily retrieved from their memory base. Once the class becomes proficient in completing a flow map on a daily task, we proceed to completing one on a story. I usually do this on the board or on the overhead projector so that everyone can participate in the creation of the flow map. I allow the students to dictate to me what they want in the boxes and if another student challenges the sequential event that another student offers, we reference back to the book. This reinforces to the student that when they question a given storyline, they can always reference back in the story for the correct order of events.

To bring sequencing to a higher level of thinking skill, I provide the students with index cards and allow them to either work in groups or independently to create a flow map using the cards. This activity provides them with the ability to add in cards when they have forgotten important events, move the cards around to check another student's comprehension skills, and create a visual key for comprehension. This activity can also be used for remediation, as the students can draw pictures of important events onto the cards if writing the events is too difficult for their developmental readiness.

Teaching sequencing provides the teacher with both informal and formal modes of assessment. It also promotes comprehension skills and can be integrated into a variety of curriculum areas. Sequencing has to be taught in small steps, as relating an event to a given order is often a difficult task for beginning learners. Using these steps to teach sequential order can provide your students with a good foundation for using tools that promote the ability to comprehend and retell events in a developmentally appropriate manner.