



Merit Online Learning Reading Skill Builder Series

Upper Elementary through Middle School
High Beginning ESL through Intermediate

Complete series: 3 levels

Internet Explorer 6.0+ (Windows)
Safari 3.0+ (Windows and Mac)
Firefox 2.0+ (Windows, Linux, and Mac)

What Does Reading Skill Builder Do?

Reading Skill Builder gives students personal, immediate feedback and provides online tracking for teachers.

The program helps students master specific reading skills. Students answer questions about short reading passages. The program indicates whether the answers are correct or incorrect and explains why.

The program promotes careful reading. Some passages that seem familiar ask a different question or have words that change the meaning.

Scope of the Program: Skills

Each Reading Skill Builder level contains over 250 reading passages divided into 3 units of progressive difficulty.

Levels 1 and 2 skills:

vocabulary, sequence, main idea, fact-opinion, author's purpose, factual recall, and inference

Level 3 skills:

vocabulary, main idea, sequence, factual recall, textual evidence, inference, and drawing conclusions.

Examples of questions for each skill are in the Contents section, at the end of this document.

Implementation

Suggested allocation of time for using the program

For best results we recommend that students use the program 20 to 30 minutes a session, two to three times a week, for six to eight weeks in conjunction with other methods of instruction. Program usage should be paced to allow students sufficient time between sessions to absorb the material.

Suggested overview of student sessions

Students advance through the program at their own pace.

Each Reading Skill Builder unit is divided into four sections for students to work through:

- Tryout – A diagnostic pre-test
- Warm-up – Learning and practice for individual skills
- Workout – Learning and practice in a mixed skills format
- Finals – A diagnostic post-test

The Warm-up and Workout sections of the program are designed to promote learning and mastery by providing feedback immediately after students select an answer. If students select a wrong answer, the feedback shows the correct answer and explains why it is correct. The program also explains why incorrect answers are incorrect. The explanations help students to succeed on the questions that follow. The feedback also supports students who get the answer right. Students can compare their own thought process with the one provided.

The Warm-up and Workout sections are designed so that students may do as many rounds as necessary to master the material.

Tracking students' work

Students and teachers are able to track improvement through students' Online Portfolios and Reports. Using these tools to view the Warm-up and Workout rounds informs students and teachers of what skills students are mastering and what skills students are having difficulty mastering.

Teacher Orientation to Program Structure or “Anatomy of the Program”

The Reading Skill Builder program appears in the student's Learning Center.

Student's Learning Center

Merit Central

Welcome Bill Wood

Home Online Portfolio Reports Preferences Log out

My Learning Center

Courses

Book Punch

- A Lion To Guard Us
- Chocolate Fever
- Stone Fox

Reading Foundations

- Reading Skill Builder, Level 1

Course	Program Unit	Last played	Section	% complete	Comments
Reading Skill Builder	Unit 1	11/24/2010	Warm-up	57%	
	Unit 2				
	Unit 3				
- Reading Skill Builder, Level 2

Vocabulary

- Confused Words Fix-Up 1
- Confused Words Fix-Up 2
- Confused Words Fix-Up 3

Welcome to Merit Online Learning

The programs you have been assigned are in the center of the page.

Click the + next to each program name to see the units of the program.

Click the program unit to start the lesson.

Click the course name for details about the course.

You can view your progress by clicking Online Portfolio in the top menu bar.

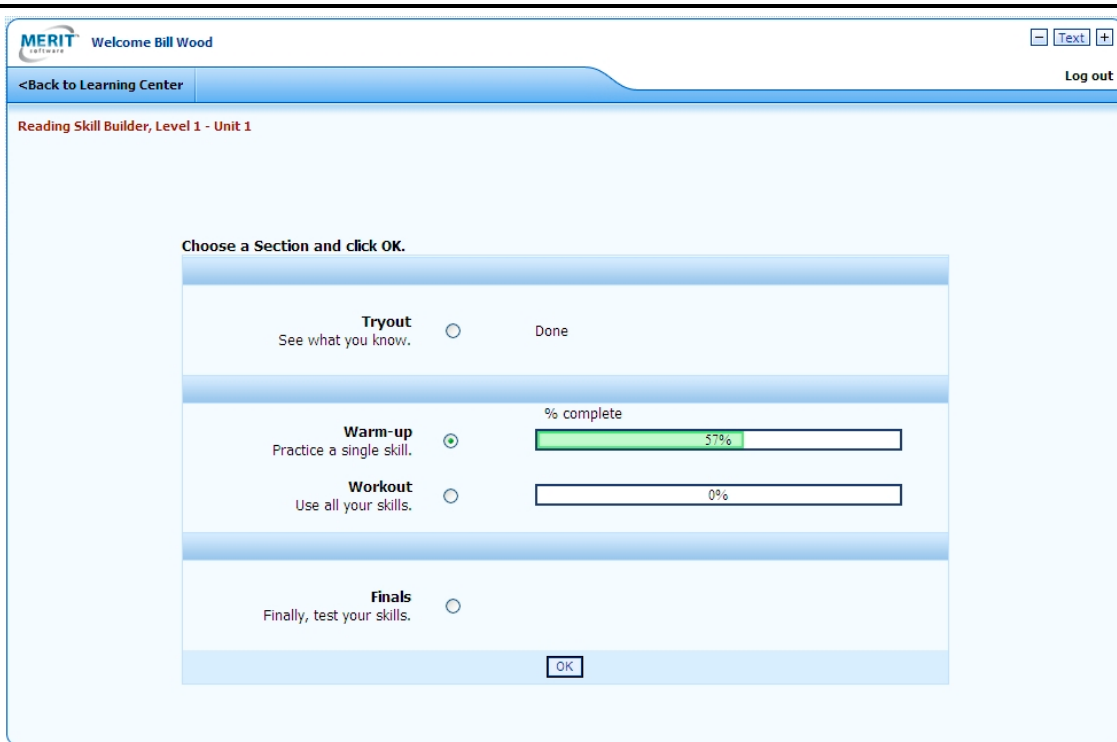
Student User Guide (Adobe Acrobat Reader required)

The student clicks the + next to the Reading Skill Builder program level to see the units of the level.

The student clicks the unit name to start a lesson.

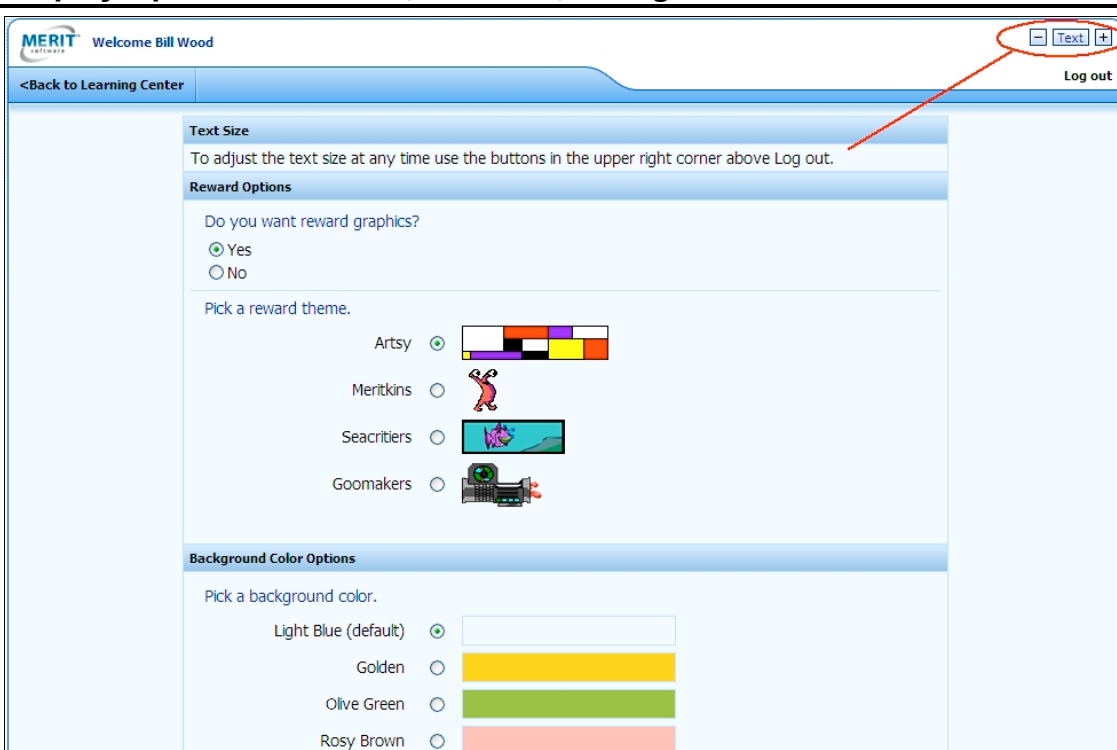
Next, the student selects a section. The section menu indicates whether the student has done the Tryout and Finals and the % complete for the Warm-up and Workout.

Section Menu



Students can adjust the text size and choose a different background color at the start of each section. At the start of the Warm-up and Workout they can also choose a graphic reward theme.

Display Options: Text Size, Rewards, Background Color



In all sections the student is presented with a text and asked to choose the correct answer.

Sample Question

The screenshot shows the Reading Skill Builder interface. At the top, it says "Welcome Bill Wood" and "5 of 21". The question is titled "Reading Skill Builder, Level 1 - Unit 1: Tryout". The text of the question is: "George went on a picnic with his class. He was playing catch in the meadow. George heard a tiny voice say, 'Be careful!' He looked around. 'I am down here!' the voice said. George looked down. He saw a tiny insect that looked like an ant. 'What are you?' asked George. 'Why, I am a termite,' the little bug said. This was written to:". The options are: Inform, Entertain, and Persuade. There is an "OK" button at the bottom.

Feedback and help messages are shown in the Warm-up and Workout sections.

Sample Question with Feedback

The screenshot shows the Reading Skill Builder interface. At the top, it says "Welcome Bill Wood" and "2 of 6". The question is titled "Reading Skill Builder, Level 1 - Unit 1: Warm-up: Sequence". The text of the question is: "Jacinta went to the store. Then she went to the post office to mail a package. Which did she do FIRST?". The options are: She went to the store., She went to the post office., and She mailed a package. Below the options, there is a feedback message: "★ Yes, that's right. The correct answer is: She went to the store. FIRST, Jacinta went to the store. THEN, she went to the post office. She mailed a package LAST." There is a "Continue" button at the bottom.

Following each round, the student sees a summary screen showing his/her progress and achievement in that round.

Sample Summary Screen

The screenshot shows a web interface for 'Reading Skill Builder, Level 1 - Unit 1: Tryout'. At the top, it says 'Welcome Bill Wood' and has a 'Text' button. Below the header, there are navigation links: '<Back to Learning Center', 'Info', and 'Print', along with a 'Log out' button. The main content area displays the tryout score: 'Tryout score: 76%'. Below this is a table with two columns: 'Skill' and 'Score details'. The table lists eight skills with their corresponding scores represented by stars and checkmarks.

Skill	Score details
Vocabulary	★★★★✓
Sequence	★★
Main Idea	★★★★✓
Fact/Opinion	★★
Author's Purpose	★★
Factual Recall	★★
Inference	★★

At the bottom of the table area, there is a 'Section Menu' button.

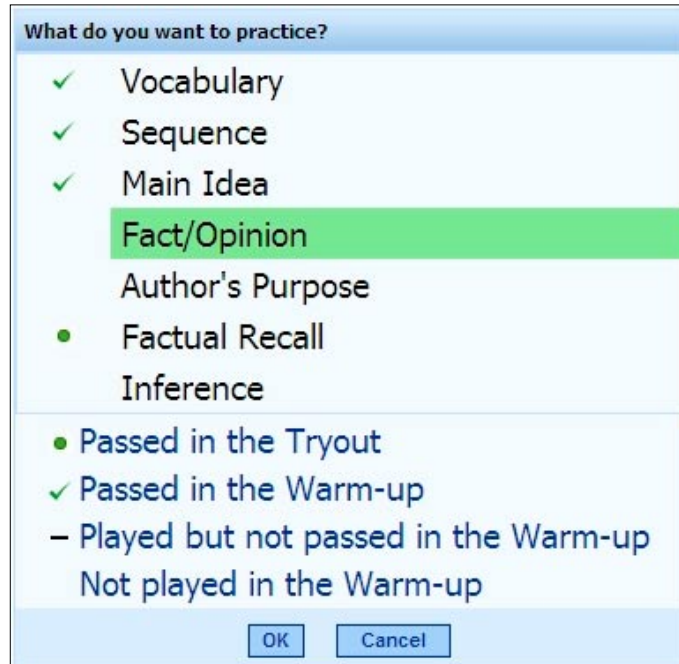
Section Details

TRYOUT: The student will be given 21 questions, three questions for each skill in the unit. To pass a skill in the Tryout, the student must make correct choices for all three questions. The status bar at the top of the screen shows how far along the student is in the Tryout. When the student has finished all the questions, a summary screen will show how the student did. The student gets a star for each correct answer and a check for skills the student has passed. The skills that the student passes in this section will also be shown as passed in the Warm-up.

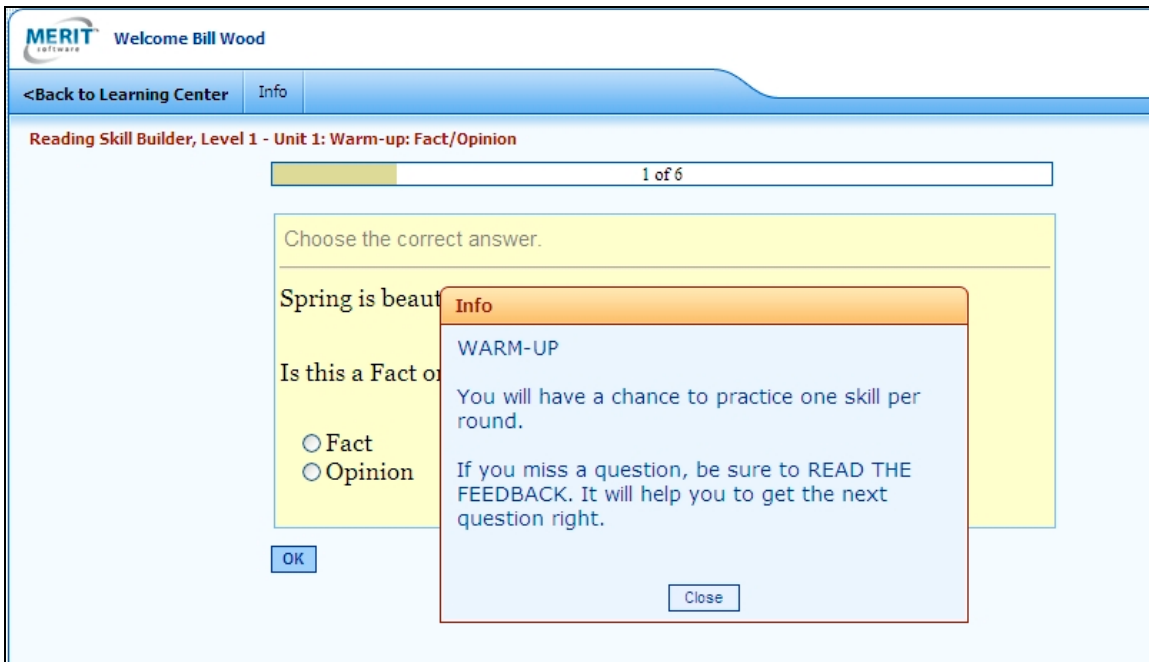
The screenshot shows a question screen for 'Reading Skill Builder, Level 1 - Unit 1: Tryout'. At the top, it says 'Welcome Bill Wood' and has a 'Text' button. Below the header, there are navigation links: '<Back to Learning Center', 'Info', and 'Print', along with a 'Log out' button. The main content area displays a progress bar showing '1 of 21' questions. Below the progress bar, there is a question: 'Choose the correct answer. My friend MADE something good to eat. Something MA...'. There are three radio button options: 'built or pu...', 'able to clea...', and 'on its first...'. An 'Info' popup window is overlaid on the question, containing the text: 'TRYOUT Show what you already know. This will help you find out what to practice later on. The summary screen at the end will show you how well you did.' The popup has 'OK' and 'Close' buttons.

WARM-UP: The student selects one skill to practice per round. To pass a skill in the Warm-up, the student must make five correct choices out of six questions in a round.

Skills that the student passed in the Tryout are shown with bullets on the Warm-up menu. Checks on the Warm-up menu show skills that the student has passed in the Warm-up.

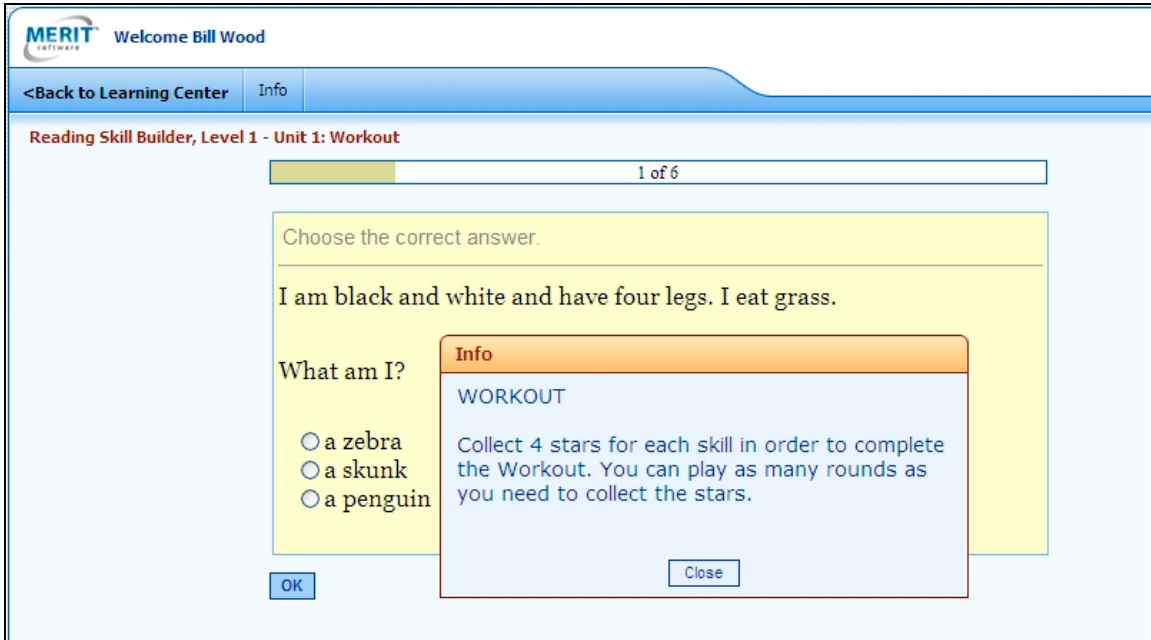


The status bar at the top of the Warm-up screen shows the question count for the round.



When the student has finished the six questions for a skill, a summary screen will show how the student did. The student gets a star for each correct answer. Red stars show correct answers for the current round. Gray stars show correct answers for preceding rounds. The summary screen shows checks for the skills the student has passed in the Tryout and in the Warm-up. The bar at the top of the summary screen indicates how far along the student is in the Warm-up.

WORKOUT: The student will be challenged to use all skills presented in random order. To complete the Workout, the student needs to answer correctly 28 questions, four for each skill. The student plays at least five rounds, each containing six randomly selected questions from several skill areas. The status bar at the top of the screen shows which question of the six presented in the round the student is working on.



At the end of each Workout round a summary screen will show how the student did. The student gets a star for each correct answer. Red stars show correct answers for the current round. Gray stars show correct answers for preceding rounds. When the student has collected four stars in a skill area, the student gets a check indicating the skill has been passed. When the student has gotten checks in all skill areas, the Workout has been completed.



FINALS: The student will be given 21 questions, three questions for each skill in the unit. To pass a skill in the Finals, the student must make correct choices for all three questions. The status bar at the top of the screen shows how far along the student is in the Finals.

When the student has finished all the questions, a summary screen will show how the student did. The student gets a star for each correct answer and a check for skills the student has passed.

Reading Skill Builder, Level 1 - Unit 1: Finals

Finals score: 90%

Skill	Score details
Vocabulary	★ ★ ★ ✓
Sequence	★ ★ ★ ✓
Main Idea	★ ★ ★ ✓
Fact/Opinion	★ ★ x
Author's Purpose	★ ★ ★ ✓
Factual Recall	★ ★ x
Inference	★ ★ ★ ✓

Section Menu

Show Questions Missed Report

The student may view the Questions Missed Report to see any questions the student missed on the Finals.

The report includes what the student answered and the correct answer

The Questions Missed Report is also available in the Online Portfolio.

Reading Skill Builder, Level 1 - Unit 1 Page 1 of 1

Work of: Wood, Bill
 Program: Reading Skill Builder, Level 1 - Unit 1
 Section: Finals
 Date: 11/29/2010

Questions Missed Report

Fact/Opinion
 Watching television is more fun than reading books.\\ Is this a Fact or an Opinion?
 The correct answer is: Opinion
 You selected: Fact

Factual Recall
 Every June, Douglas goes on a picnic with his grandparents. This year Douglas asked his grandmother if he could bring Juan with him. Juan had recently moved to the neighborhood. Douglas wanted to show Juan his favorite picnic place.\\ When Douglas wanted to bring Juan he asked his:
 The correct answer is: grandmother
 You selected: grandparents

Monitoring Student Work in the Online Portfolio

The Online Portfolio shows the student's summary screen for the most recently played section in the unit. To see the student's progress click the other sections' radio buttons to view their summary screens. The Reading Skill Builder Performance Detail also includes overview information about the unit such as the % complete, time, and performance score for each section.

Unit Overview

Date Started	10/1/2010
Date last played	11/23/2010
Total time	02:25:02
Tryout score	67%
Tryout % complete	Done
Tryout skills passed	1
Warm-up performance	94%
Warm-up % complete	100%
Warm-up time	01:26:49
Workout performance	93%
Workout % complete	100%
Workout rounds	11
Workout time	00:40:23
Finals score	90%

View Student's Work

Tryout
 Warm-up
 Workout
 Finals

Print

Finals score: 90%

Skill	Score details
Vocabulary	★★★★✓
Sequence	★★★X
Main Idea	★★★★✓
Fact/Opinion	★★★★✓
Author's Purpose	★★★★✓
Factual Recall	★★★★✓
Inference	★★★X

Show Questions Missed Report

Monitoring Student Work With Reports

Reports show student progress and performance through the sections of the program.

Reports are useful for viewing and exporting information about a whole class or information about one student over several classes.

Reading Skill Builder student work can be tracked with the following reports:

- Performance Summary Report
- Work-to-Date Report
- Performance Detail Report

Performance Summary Report

Course: Reading Skill Builder
 Program: Reading Skill Builder, Level 1
 Teacher: Brown, Brad

Select the rows you wish to view, print or export.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Student	Program Unit	Section	Performance	% Complete	Date Started	Date Last Played	Time
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tung, Alan	All Units				10/1/2010	11/23/2010	03:08:18
<input type="checkbox"/>		Unit 1	All Sections			10/1/2010	11/23/2010	02:31:44
<input type="checkbox"/>			Tryout	66%	Done	10/1/2010	10/1/2010	00:05:00
<input type="checkbox"/>			Warm-up	97%	71%	10/29/2010	11/23/2010	01:33:31
<input type="checkbox"/>			Workout	93%	100%	10/29/2010	10/29/2010	00:40:23
<input type="checkbox"/>			Finals	90%	Done	11/23/2010	11/23/2010	00:12:50
<input type="checkbox"/>		Unit 2	All Sections			10/30/2010	11/17/2010	00:18:05
<input type="checkbox"/>			Tryout	76%	Done	10/30/2010	11/17/2010	00:18:05
<input type="checkbox"/>	Webster, Bobbie	All Units				10/1/2010	11/23/2010	02:19:02
<input type="checkbox"/>		Unit 1	All Sections			10/1/2010	11/23/2010	02:19:02
<input type="checkbox"/>			Tryout	71%	Done	10/1/2010	10/1/2010	00:05:00
<input type="checkbox"/>			Warm-up	97%	71%	10/29/2010	11/23/2010	01:33:31
<input type="checkbox"/>			Workout	93%	100%	10/29/2010	10/29/2010	00:40:23
<input type="checkbox"/>			Finals	90%	Done	11/23/2010	11/23/2010	00:12:50

CONTENT OF READING SKILL BUILDER SERIES

Level 1: Skill levels 3 - 4, High Beginning English Language Learners

Level 2: Skill levels 4.5 - 5.5, Low Intermediate English Language Learners

Level 3: Skill levels 6 - 8, Intermediate English Language Learners

Note skill levels correspond to U.S. equivalent grade levels.

Skills with examples from Level 1, Unit 1

VOCABULARY: Students are given words and asked to select the correct meaning from among several choices. Words appear in context. Incorrect response messages show students how they may have mistaken the meaning of a word.

EXAMPLE: Student reads: "Jenny walked along the EDGE of a field. EDGE is . . ." Student chooses from: "near the middle," "many miles long," and "at the end or side."

SEQUENCE: Students are given selections based on time order (e.g., for events) or order of steps (e.g., in directions). Students are asked what would come first, second, third, or last, or are told to find the proper place for a particular step in the directions for doing or making something.

EXAMPLE: Student reads: "Marcus wanted to play baseball. He called all of his friends to ask them to play, but they were all busy. In the end, Marcus realized he could not play baseball that day. What happened LAST?" Student chooses from: "Marcus called his friends to ask them to play baseball," "Marcus wanted to play baseball," and "Marcus realized he could not play baseball."

MAIN IDEA: Students read a variety of selections and answer questions that test such reading skills as identifying the main idea, recognizing irrelevant sentences in a paragraph, and locating the topic sentence.

EXAMPLE: Student reads: "Police officers are very helpful people. If you are lost, you can ask a police officer for directions. If you are hurt, a police officer will get you help. Whenever you are in trouble, always think of your helpful police officer." Student chooses the best title from: "Happy Police Officers," "Neighborhood Police Officers," and "Your Helpful Police Officer."

FACT OR OPINION: Students are asked to differentiate between fact and opinion in a variety of statements.

EXAMPLE: Student reads: "Watching television is more fun than reading books. Is this Fact or Opinion?"

AUTHOR'S PURPOSE: Students read a variety of selections and determine if the author wrote the selection to inform, entertain or persuade.

EXAMPLE: Student reads: "Snakes do not have arms or legs. They do not have fins or wings. But some snakes can climb trees or swim in water. Others jump out of trees. They flatten their bodies when they jump. This helps them fall slowly and land safely. Some snakes hatch out of eggs. Others are born live. There are more than 2,000 different kinds of snakes."

FACTUAL RECALL: Students read a variety of selections and answer questions based on the details provided in the text.

EXAMPLE: Student reads: "Carl mailed a letter to Julie. He forgot to put a stamp on it. A week later the mail carrier brought it back and asked Carl to put a stamp on it. Who brought the letter back?" Student chooses from: "Julie," "Carl," and "the mail carrier."

INFERENCE: Students are given a variety of selections. From the context they must draw inferences about situations, events, people, objects, feelings, etc.

EXAMPLE: Student reads: "I picked up a cup and went to the sink. I filled the cup with water. Was the faucet in the garden or in the kitchen?" Student chooses from: "the kitchen" and "the garden."

Skills with examples from Level 3, Unit 1

The following two skills are introduced in Level 3 of the program.

TEXTUAL EVIDENCE: Students are asked to identify which sentence or phrase from a selection supports a statement about the selection.

EXAMPLE: Student reads: "Helen Keller lost her sight and hearing as the result of contracting a serious illness when she was a young child. She did not learn to speak because she had lost her hearing at such a young age. To help her, Helen's parents hired a gifted teacher named Ann Sullivan who taught Helen to feel things with her hands and put names to the objects. In this way, Helen developed language and eventually learned to read Braille. Ann helped Helen complete college. Then, for 50 years, Helen published many books about blindness, deafness, and social issues."

"Helen Keller overcame serious physical challenges.

Which phrase from the text is evidence of this statement?"

Student chooses from: "lost her sight and hearing as a result of a serious disease," "parents hired a gifted teacher," and "helped Helen complete college."

DRAWING CONCLUSIONS: Students read a variety of selections and make a reasoned deduction based on the information given.

EXAMPLE: Student reads: "Canaries are popular as pets; they are good company because they are lively birds and their cheerful song makes people smile. Canaries are named for the Canary Islands, which is the only place they are found in the wild. Tame canaries, however, live in all parts of the world."

"What can we conclude from this paragraph?"

Student chooses from: "Canaries are quiet birds." "Canaries are sold only in the Canary Islands." and "All canaries do not live in cages."