

WILSON[®] Comprehension S.O.S.[™] Overview

Comprehension S.O.S. (**Stop – Orient – Scaffold / Support**) is a *process* used in a Wilson lesson by a teacher when the teacher is reading something to a student. The teacher reads and intermittently stops and interacts to support the students' understanding of the text. It is intended to guide students' comprehension and to teach students through modeling and discussion. Some of the things to aim to accomplish through the Comprehension S.O.S. process are:

- Engagement of students in order to establish a deep understanding, rather than surface understanding, of content.
- The discussion and explanation of vocabulary, idioms, phrases, and word usage within content in a “natural” way with easy, smooth interaction.
- The demonstration of a “thinking while reading” process—showing students how to engage interactively with the text to make it “come alive.”
- The monitoring of understanding by stopping, checking, and showing students how to say, “Wait a minute, do I get this?” The goal is to do this with students to prepare them to do it on their own. They should become able to tell you exactly where they are confused and what they can “see” and not “see.”

Comprehension S.O.S.[™] Procedure at a Glance

- Reread and elicit discussion at appropriate interval
- Elicit and explain vocabulary using student-friendly definition, model thinking
- Create imagery, help student to picture story, referring to working of text
- Draw pictorial representation of content referring to wording of text (as needed)
- Have student replay visualization and rehearse a retelling of the passage
- Have student retell story in detail and proper sequence, model as needed

The following suggestions are helpful to accomplish these goals:

- Create a comfortable, relaxed and open atmosphere with both the physical environment and the emotional environment. You might bring the group around a table or form a circle with desks for this part of the lesson. You might turn off the lights or shut the shades to create a more relaxing environment. You want to use a voice that is calming and draws people in, rather than a demanding “teacher voice.”
- Prepare well so that the discussion is more smooth and seamless. That includes deciding which words / phrases you might just quickly explain and which ones you will use to elicit students' knowledge and understanding and discuss in more detail. You should plan what you might demonstrate or gesture, and what you might draw out.

The process is not an exact science, but more of a “dance.” Here are some things to keep in mind which are critical for the success of this process:

- Narrative text is the best entrée into the process. Read to students a vocabulary-rich, age-appropriate fiction. (It should be challenging and enjoyable.) Don't select high-interest, low-level vocabulary books which are not appropriate for read-alouds (use them when searching for decodable text, as appropriate). Eventually, it is important to begin transferring the process to expository text passages as well.
- Comprehension S.O.S. is a listening comprehension process. Because this is an interactive process with students, you do not pre-teach vocabulary; instead, you discuss within context. This is different from reading comprehension, which is not interactive. Then, pre-teaching may be necessary or beneficial.

- It often works best to read a portion of text (such as a paragraph), briefly check understanding, then do Comprehension S.O.S.
- With some words / phrases you'll quickly explain; with others you'll elicit discussion, then provide brief, easy-to-understand clarification / confirmation.
- Reread the words from the text in small chunks as you connect words to imagery or as you draw out a sketch. You might reread a sentence, then a phrase within a sentence, discuss it, and finally reread the whole sentence again. The point is to make a connection with the actual meaning of the written text. Do not set a passage aside and simply draw it out without constantly connecting to the written word.
- Balance between sometimes eliciting the students' understanding of a word or phrase and sometimes simply providing a quick, efficient explanation for some of the words. This should be orchestrated seamlessly and not seem so "lesson-like." If too much is elicited in a "teacher-like" voice, the experience is neither enjoyable nor effective. When a passage has many challenging words or phrases, be sure to create this balance.
- Weave questions to elicit meaning in a conversational way with much give-and-take, including inference questions. Ask for and tell students your thought process when talking about inferences. Don't ask in an unfriendly teacher voice, "What is the inference here?" Instead, share that it "doesn't really say this, but what might we figure out from the facts that...?" Or "What things might lead us to think that?"
- Be sure to say things such as, "I didn't know what that word meant either. I looked it up and it means...." Or, "I'm not sure what that word/phrase means, but I am guessing it means.... Why do you think I am guessing that?"
- After "pulling apart" a paragraph, it is nice to show students how different the language of the text will now sound to them by reading the whole paragraph to them again. Do this initially, and periodically, emphasizing how awesome it is that second time when you can really "see" the words. However, don't do this for every paragraph. Do it initially when beginning the process with students to show what a difference to their understanding the visualization/ pulling apart makes.
- Keep in mind that a very important aspect of this instruction is to DIRECTLY teach students how to read for deep understanding and monitor their understanding. As you continue the process with students, say things such as, "Okay, I am going to read the next paragraph to you while you keep your movie going in your mind. I want you to pay close attention to where your movie gets stuck or when you can't picture something. After I finish the paragraph this time, I am going to ask you to tell me what you saw and then where you couldn't see something or where your picture became somewhat fuzzy."
- Explain that what you are doing is teaching them how to check their understanding while they are listening and that you are also going to have them practice doing it when they are reading on their own at other times (in Part 9, and later in Part 10 - Application of Skills).
- Another way to help students learn to monitor their comprehension is to say to them, "I am going to retell this next paragraph for you after I read and replay it. You listen to me retell it and see if you can hear what I leave out." (Then retell, leaving some details out.) Teach students to do this while other students are retelling.

The art of Comprehension S.O.S. is to get students caught up in the story. Involve them but don't make them feel quizzed. They should learn much, yet the time should be thoroughly enjoyable.