

# Visit With the Utays

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*School Psychology and Education Specialists*

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## Reading Comprehension: Better when Reading Fast or Slow?

The answer may surprise you.

"Dear Drs. Utay: I have read what you wrote about reading comprehension problems sometimes not really being about reading comprehension. With finals around the corner I need some better understanding of this idea. I want my high schooler in particular to **improve his ability to answer questions about what he reads.**"

End-of-the-semester tests are on the horizon so this is good timing. Usually, reading comprehension issues are not about failure to understand the meaning of what is read but rather failure to actually read the individual words. It is about basic skills of reading. Since first one must read THEN understand what is read, **basic skills are a pre-requisite for understanding what is read.**

Signs of issues with basic reading skills include needing to sound out individual words, not recognizing memorized sight words, and not reading quickly enough. Most people think reading comprehension is better when reading slowly. However, if your child's reading fluency (reading accuracy plus speed) is not good, then he can't read quickly well enough to remember what he read. In other words, **reading too slowly, students get bogged down in the individual words and miss the overall meaning.**

If basic skills of reading are at least adequate, then a reading comprehension problem may be due to issues with fluency (see above), working memory, attention, vocabulary, language, anxiety, or vision. It is vital to **find out exactly where the issue with reading comprehension is before a program to improve it is started.**

At Total Learning Centers we have found there are very few students who just need a program that practices the strategies of reading comprehension alone. Usually, the

real block to understanding what is read is more subtle (working memory, etc.) though nonetheless definitely able to be improved. **That's the good news.**

For useful information about your child's specific strengths and **needs** as well as **practical recommendations**, call Total Learning Centers at (724) 940-1090. If easier, email us at [success@TotalLearningCenter.com](mailto:success@TotalLearningCenter.com). Visit us at [www.TotalLearningCenter.com](http://www.TotalLearningCenter.com) and follow Dr. Carol Utay on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/carolutay>.

**Total Learning Centers was voted AGAIN Best Tutoring and Best SAT Prep by Nickelodeon's Parent Picks.**

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