

Accu-Reading Series

Skill levels 5 - 11

Complete program: 6 units
Accu-Reading Starter - Set 1 (Units 1,2,3)
Accu-Reading Challenge - Set 2 (Units 4,5,6)

For details about each unit, see the Content section on page 3
For teaching suggestions see page 4

Evaluation versions: Units 2 and 5
Tracks work for two students.

Windows 98/Me/NT/2000/2003/XP
8 MB RAM, 32 MB hard disk space

This program requires a minimum screen resolution of 800 by 600 pixels.

The program helps students master specific reading skills: main idea, vocabulary, sequence, factual recall, inference, and drawing conclusions. Skill questions are based on short non-fiction texts. Each set contains 144 passages and 302 questions.

Designed for students at different levels of reading proficiency. The program focuses on six skills within each unit of difficulty. In addition, crossword puzzles encourage the student to think about word and idea relationships. The format allows the reading selection, the question, and the multiple-choice answers to remain on screen at the same time so the student can refer to the text when choosing an answer. The program can also be used by ESL and adult students interested in improving their reading skills.

The program contains short non-fiction reading selections designed to promote mastery of specific reading skills: vocabulary, sequence, main idea, factual recall, inference, and drawing conclusion. This self-paced improvement and management program helps students sharpen their reading skills and lets teachers monitor their students' independent learning. After an assessment, students work on specific skills or learn in a mixed practice format that includes crossword puzzles and two-answer questions. They receive help and contextual feedback. Students are able to track their progress and print results. Student scores are kept in a management system that allows teachers to view and print reports. A list of all skills in the program appears at the end of this document.

For logging on instructions, see the Logging on and Class Management section of this guide. Versions are available for stand-alone, network, or home use.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Each unit of the program contains four MAIN MENU parts: Tryout, Warm-up, Workout, and Finals. Summary screens follow each round of each part of the Main Menu. The Print option shows the student's progress to date, not just the results of an individual round.

TRYOUT: The student will find out what skills to work on. He will be given three texts for each skill in this unit. To pass a skill, he must make correct choices for all texts. The bar at the bottom of the screen shows how much of the Tryout he has completed.

Summary-Tryout: When the student has finished all the questions, a summary screen will show how he did. A check next to a skill lets the student know he has passed. The skills that he passes in this section will also be shown as passed in the Warm-up.

WARM-UP: The student will have a chance to practice one skill per round. A tutor will take the student step by step through a sample text for each skill. Help messages, as well as sound and graphic rewards, are available. To pass, the student must make six correct choices in a round. The student is given a maximum of twelve questions per round. Checks on the Warm-up menu show skills that the student has already passed, either in the Tryout or in the Warm-up.

Summary-Warm-up: The student gets a star for each correct answer. When the student gets six stars, he gets a check that lets him know that he has passed. The bar at the bottom of the screen indicates how many skills the student has passed in the Warm-up.

WORKOUT: The student will be challenged to use all skills presented in random order. Help messages, as well as sound and graphic rewards, are available. To complete the Workout, the student needs to play at least six rounds, each containing up to eight randomly selected questions from several skill areas. To pass the Workout, the student must make six correct choices for each skill. The bar at the bottom of the screen first shows how far along he is in the whole Workout and then continues to show how far along he is in the current round.

Wrap-up (follows the Workout): The Wrap-up consists of two activities; a two-answer question and a crossword. It gives the student a different way to see what he has learned.

Summary-Workout: At the end of each 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 five stars in a skill area, he has passed it. When he has gotten five stars in all skill areas, he has finished the Workout. The bar at the bottom of the screen indicates how many skills the student has passed in the Workout.

FINALS: The student is tested on the same skills but with some different texts from those used in the Tryout. He will be given four texts for each skill. To pass a skill, the student must make at least three correct choices. The bar at the bottom of the screen shows how much of the Finals he has completed.

Summary-Finals: When the student has finished all the questions, a summary screen will show how he did. A check next to a skill lets the student know he has passed.

Targeted Workout (follows the Finals): If the student has NOT passed one or more skills in the Finals, he is prompted to do this optional exercise and then repeat the Finals.

PROGRAM HELP FEATURES

The program provides two help features. First, the Warm-up, individual skill drill, gives the student the opportunity to focus on a specific skill. A check next to a skill on the Warm-up menu indicates that the student has mastered that skill. Checked skills may be chosen for additional drill. Second, for the Warm-up and the Workout, whenever a student answers incorrectly s/he is told why the answer is incorrect and is asked to try again.

LOGGING ON AND CLASS MANAGEMENT

There are two options for adding student names to the record database.

- Teacher controlled – appropriate for most schools. Names added with the Teacher Program Manager (TPM) Set Up Student Names functions. See the Teacher Program Manager section of the guide.
- Student controlled – for home users and for mature students. Names added at the Logon Screen.

The program opens to a Log on screen with all previously entered class codes and student names. Students must select their class code in order to see the list of students in their class. They then click on their name to begin the program. If the program is in student controlled mode and students are logging on for the first time, they select their class code, click the New Student icon, and fill in their name on the form that appears on the screen.

The evaluation version of the program permits entry of only two student names. When a third name is entered, the first one will be deleted. The stand-alone version for one station contains record keeping for

42 students. Other School versions permit entry of as many names as disk space allows. When disk space is filled, the name that was entered first will be deleted.

SCORING

Students may print out their scores at the end of round progress-to-date screen. Teachers may view detailed scoring in the Teacher Program Manager.

TEACHER PROGRAM MANAGER

All Merit Software applications utilize a centralized student record keeping/management system utility program called Teacher Program Manager (TPM). For more information about class management, scoring, and other program features see the Teacher Program Manager manual. It can be printed out from a Merit Software CD or from this link on the Internet:

http://meritsoftware.com/Teacher_Program_Manager.pdf

Here are the program features the teacher may customize for the students using the Program options menu in the TPM.

1. Hide/Show Sound
2. Hide/Show Graphics
3. Control which program parts are active
4. Set the number of correct texts needed to pass each part
5. Set the number of texts presented for specific parts

CONTENT OF ACCU-READING

Each unit presents a variety of skills. Here are the skills, with examples from Unit 1:

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

EXAMPLE: Student reads, "People have always thought that owls were very wise. This is probably because of the serious look on the owl's face and in its stern eyes. Actually, for a bird its size, the owl has a tiny brain. What is the main idea of this paragraph?" Student chooses the main idea from: "Owls are not as wise as many people think," "Owls have a serious look on their faces," and "Owls have small brains."

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

EXAMPLE: Student reads, "Prairie dogs live in the grassy REGIONS of the Great Plains. REGIONS are:" Student chooses from: "areas," "climates," and "seasons."

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

EXAMPLE: Student reads, "After the heavy rain, water ran down the mountainside into a stream. The stream flowed into a river, which emptied into the ocean. Where was the water RIGHT BEFORE it flowed into the river?" Student chooses from: "in a stream," "in the ocean," and "running down the mountainside."

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

EXAMPLE: Student reads, "Among the earliest dinosaurs were the relatively small coelurosaurs.

These dinosaurs had long delicate limb bones, many of which were hollow, birdlike feet, and long slender necks. Coelurosaurs walked on their hind legs and ran on their toes; they used their long tails to balance their bodies. What physical feature of the coelurosaurs resembled a bird's?" Student chooses from: "feet," "tail," or "neck."

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

EXAMPLE: Student reads, "A fly landed on some thin and sticky threads. It tried to move but it was stuck. Then it saw a spider crawling toward it. Where was the fly?" Student chooses from: "in the spider's web," "on flypaper," or "in a sewing kit."

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

EXAMPLE: Student reads, "Texas is home to many wildflowers. The bluebonnet is the state flower. Wildflowers provide a show of color from spring to fall. They do not have to be planted. They do not have to be watered. Some grow in the very poorest of soils. Other wildflowers grow where there is little rainfall. Wildflowers are an American treasure. This story suggests that wildflowers "add beauty to our country," "are weeds," "serve no purpose," or "are harmful."

SUGGESTIONS FOR USING THIS 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.

Start out with Merit's *Tryouts* to see where students need reading help most.

Discuss problem areas with students.

Ask students what they read most outside of school. How much do they read outside of school? Do they use books or go online? What do they like to read?

Supplement Merit with material from social studies, science and language arts class, so students may practice skills in various subject areas.

Return to the software and let students try Merit *Warm-up* and/or *Workout* sections.

Follow up each software session by asking students what new vocabulary words they have learned. What new questions do they have?

Look at a sample text. Ask students to find the key words that tell the main idea. Can they list 1-2 details? Find a fact and/or an opinion? Explain text sequence?

Have students print scores received for completing software *Warm-up* and/or *Workout* sections. Later, discuss scores with students. Are they pleased with their progress? What seems easier to them? What needs more practice?

Relate skills practiced with the software to material in social studies, science and language arts classes, so students can apply new skills to each subject area.

Ask students to try making up new titles for material being read in their social studies, science and language arts classes.

Ask students to make up sentences using vocabulary encountered in social studies, science and language arts classes. Let them work in pairs to share sentences.

Have students imagine they are making up reading/vocabulary questions for the Merit program being used. Give students a short text. Have them work in pairs to create and write their own skill-related question and answers.

Return to the software and let students try Merit's *Finals*, to help prepare for and de-mystify standardized tests.

Follow up software units with written post-tests.

Compare students' software results with gains on standardized test scores.