



## Reading Shape-Up Series

Skill levels 3 - 8

Complete program: 6 units  
Reading Shape-Up - Set 1 (Units 1, 2, 3)  
Reading Shape-Up for Upper Grades - Set 2 (Units 4, 5, 6)

For details about each unit, see the Contents section on page 4.  
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 to master specific reading skills: vocabulary, sequence, main idea, fact-opinion, factual recall, and inference. A tutor introduces each skill. Each set contains 144 passages and 292 questions.

The program is compatible with Merit Text Talker, which allows students to have the text read aloud to them.

Designed for students at different levels of reading proficiency. The program focuses on six skills within each unit of difficulty. A tutor will take the student step by step through a sample text for each skill. 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 who are interested in improving their reading skills.

The program contains a diagnostic test and short reading selections designed to promote mastery of specific reading skills: vocabulary, sequence, main idea, fact-opinion, factual recall, and inference. 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. A list of all skills in the program appears at the end of this document.

Each lesson is self-directing and self-correcting. Students receive graphic rewards. Following each round on the summary screen is a Print option, which generates a progress-to-date report. Student scores are kept in a management system that allows teachers to view and print reports.

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.

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 tutor will take the student step by step through a sample text for each 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.

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.

For more information about class management and adding student names to the database, 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](http://meritsoftware.com/Teacher_Program_Manager.pdf)

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](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

### **CONTENT OF READING SHAPE-UP**

Each unit presents a variety of skills. Here are the skills, with examples from 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," "never very large," 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 realized he could not play baseball," "Marcus wanted to play baseball," and "Marcus called his friends to ask them to 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: "Most pets have short lives. Cats, for example, rarely live more than 15 years. An exception to this is any large talking bird. Certain kinds of macaws can live over 100 years. Parrots can live to be 50, and myna birds can live to be 80. People have passed these pets from generation to generation." Student chooses the main idea from: "Some birds can live to be very old," "Parrots can live to be 50," and "Most pets have short lives."

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

**EXAMPLE:** Student reads: "Traveling by train is more comfortable than traveling by bus. Is this Fact or Opinion?"

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

**EXAMPLE:** Student reads: "Alex was a musician. He played the flute in an orchestra every Sunday. He gave music lessons every day. When there was a parade, he marched with the band. In his spare time he wrote music. Every day, Alex did the following:" Student chooses from: "gave flute lessons," "marched with a parade," and "played in an orchestra."

**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 it with water. Was the faucet in the garden or in the kitchen?" Student chooses from: "the kitchen" and "the garden."

### **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 in standardized test scores.

#### **TIPS FOR INTRODUCING MERIT TEXT TALKER**

The Merit Text Talker is an optional feature that may be helpful for your students. Introduce the Merit Text Talker feature to students by demonstrating how it functions.

Show how they can right-click in a text box to have the "Say text" pop-up message appear. Then show that moving the mouse over the pop-up highlights the pop-up. Press the highlighted pop-up to have the text read aloud. Right-click again to stop the text.

Show students that using the Application Key (next to the right-side CTRL Key) is equivalent to right-clicking.

Have students practice using the Merit Text Talker.

Encourage students to change the Merit voice periodically from "Kate" to "Paul," so they can practice listening to two different voices.