



## **REAL WORLD READING SKILLS**

(for low/high intermediate English language learners and adult literacy students)  
U.S. skill levels 4 - 6

Complete program: 4 units  
Set 1: Units 1 and 2, U.S. skill levels 4 - 5  
Set 2: Units 3 and 4, U.S. skill levels 5 - 6

For contents of the program, see page 3.  
For teaching suggestions, see page 4.

Evaluation version: Unit 2  
Tracks work for two students.

Windows 98/Me/NT/2000/2003/XP  
8 MB RAM, 39 MB hard disk space  
This program requires a minimum screen resolution of 800 by 600 pixels.

The program helps students improve their literacy and sharpen their ability to understand the information in basic texts. They read short texts about everyday situations. Each set contains 36 text and 190 questions.

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

This program is designed for low/high intermediate English language learners and adult literacy students who need help in hearing and comprehending English. Special emphasis is placed on sharpening students' ability to understand information in basic texts.

Real World Reading Skills contains short selections about everyday situations. Students read a text on such topics as jobs, communication, government, money management, and shopping, and do a variety of exercises, from matching vocabulary to using their own words to answer a question. Teachers may write a comment to the student that will be saved until the student sees it.

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.

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**

**TRYOUT:** The Tryout helps the student find the right texts to work on. It is over as soon as he misses a text. The student then moves on to texts in the Workout, where help is available. Because the Tryout helps to assess the student's skills, he does not get any sounds or graphic rewards until he has completed it. The bar at the bottom of the screen will show how much of the Tryout has been completed. When the student has finished, a summary screen will show how he did.

Stars show the number of texts passed. A check shows that the student has done an excellent job. 'Print' will show how he did in a progress-to-date report.

**WORKOUT:** The student will be challenged to use all skills. Help messages, as well as sound and graphic rewards, are available. To complete the Workout, the student needs to play at least six rounds. There are two reading groups on the Workout. When the student begins, three texts in each round are chosen randomly from the level's lower reading range. The student must complete the texts in this group (1-9) before moving on to the texts in the next group (10-18). A summary of scores appears after each round.

The student's understanding of each text is divided into five exercises: (1) Vocabulary match (2) Find a fact (3) Choose a key word (4) Student's key word sentence.

In each exercise, students get twice as much credit for answering correctly on the first try as on the second try. If the student gets a "You are having trouble" message after any of these exercises, it means the student's score was not high enough to go on to the next exercise. Any text on which the student fails to score high enough will be included in the group of randomly chosen texts for subsequent rounds.

Students must get at least 70% in each exercise to go on to the next one. The program allows each text to remain on screen at the same time as questions or crossword, so the student can refer to the text when choosing an answer.

#### VOCABULARY MATCH (exercise 1)

The student reads the text and is shown three or four consecutively highlighted words seen both on a match list and in context. He/she then selects the best replacement or definition for each word from among multiple choice answers provided.

#### FIND A FACT (exercise 2)

The student reads a question about facts based on the text and selects the best answer from three choices.

#### CHOOSE A KEY WORD (exercise 3)

The student reads a question based on the text and selects, from three choices, one key word or term that could be used in a sentence to answer the question.

#### STUDENT'S KEY WORD SENTENCE (exercise 4)

The student is asked to answer the question from exercise 3. Students are encouraged to write complete sentences; this requires greater concentration and longer focus than giving a single-word answer. The sentence must begin with a capital letter and have appropriate end punctuation. The computer provides a sample sentence which the student can compare with his/her own sentence to see if they express a similar idea.

At the end of each round a summary screen will show how the student did. The student gets a star for each text passed. 70% is passing. Red stars show the texts passed for the current round. Gray stars show correct answers for preceding rounds. When the student has seven stars in a group, he has passed it. When he has gotten seven stars in both groups, he has finished the Workout. The bar at the bottom of the screen indicates how many texts the student has passed in the Workout. The scores shown on the screen are only for this round. 'Print' will show how he did in this round as well as his progress to date.

**FINALS:** The student is tested on the same skills but with different texts from those used in the Tryout. The bar at the bottom of the screen shows how much of the Finals he has completed. When the student has finished all the questions, a summary screen will show how he did.

The summary screen displays the student's overall score for the round, the "All skills" score, as well as scores for the specific reading skills. In addition the screen displays a star for each text in which the student scores 70% or over. The student can get a maximum of three stars. 'Print' will show how he did in all the parts of the program.

**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.

**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 students using the Program options menu in the TPM.

1. Hide/Show Sound
2. Hide/Show Graphics
3. Control which program parts are active

**CONTENTS OF REAL WORLD READING SKILLS  
Real World Reading Skills, Set 1 (Contains Units 1 and 2)****UNIT 1**

1. Employment Skills: Looking at Help Wanted Ads
2. Civics: Voting
3. Civics: Quality Of Life Laws and Littering
4. Health: Prenatal Care
5. Consumer Economics: Bank Loans
6. Employment Skills: Getting to Work on Time
7. Environment: Disposing of Old Electronic Equipment
8. Social Skills: Sending an Apology
9. Family Literacy: Encouraging Reading
10. Government and Law: Withholding Taxes
11. Consumer Economics: Using Checks
12. Health: Shopping and Reading Labels
13. Health: Allergic Reactions
14. Environment: Recycling
15. Consumer Economics: Getting Credit
16. Consumer Economics: Shopping and Expiration Dates
17. Consumer Economics: Writing Checks
18. Community Resources: Parent-Teacher Involvement

**UNIT 2**

1. Employment Skills: Job Benefits
2. Consumer Economics: Shopping Coupons
3. Health: Walking for Exercise
4. Environment: Bicycling
5. Employment Skills: Dressing for a Job Interview
6. Environment: Visiting National Parks
7. Health: Food Shopping When Hungry
8. Consumer Economics: Using Credit Cards
9. Family Literacy: Locating Library Books Online
10. Employment Skills: Following a Dream
11. Employment Skills: Getting Job Training
12. Government and Law: Providing Services
13. Health: Shopping for Special Diets
14. Family Literacy: Making a Computer Backup
15. Social Skills: Dining Out
16. Government and Law: The Rights for the Arrested
17. Environment: Circus Animals
18. Technology: Professional Emails

**Real World Reading Skills, Set 2 (Contains Units 3 and 4)****UNIT 3**

1. Consumer Economics: Using Shopping Coupons
2. Technology: Direct Dialing
3. Employment Skills: Reading Help Wanted Ads
4. Government and Law: Criminal Trials
5. Consumer Economics: Income Tax Forms
6. Consumer Economics: Saving Receipts
7. Civics: Voting
8. Social Skills: Writing Thank-You Notes
9. Family Literacy: Improving School Performance
10. Social Skills: Responding to Invitations
11. Environment: Danger from Pesticides
12. Social Skills: Reserving a Table
13. Consumer Economics: Homes and Mortgages
14. Consumer Economics: Shopping By Phone
15. Civics: Registering to Vote
16. Health: Shoes and Foot Care
17. Technology: The Postal System
18. Community Resources: Returning to School

**UNIT 4**

1. Employment Skills: Dressing For A Job Interview
2. Civics: Local Governments Provide Water
3. Consumer Economics: Checking Receipts
4. Consumer Economics: Getting Credit
5. Civics: Absentee Ballots
6. Environment: Organic Farming
7. Employment Skills: Being Punctual
8. Environment: Sources of Energy
9. Technology: Buying Used Textbooks Online
10. Consumer Economics: Using Traveler's Checks
11. Consumer Economics: Tipping in Restaurants
12. Technology: Computers Are Everywhere
13. Employment Skills: Answering Help Wanted Ads
14. Consumer Economics: Postage & Handling Charges
15. Consumer Economics: Car Loans
16. Government and Law: Social Security Tax
17. Civics: Jury Service
18. Community Resources: Getting Help Applying for Jobs

**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 comprehension help the 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 a variety of subject areas.

Return to the software and have students try the *Workout* section.

Follow up each software session. Ask students to name something from the software texts that was already familiar to them before their session. Can they name something they read about for the first time? 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? What can they infer from the text?

Have students print scores received for completing software *Workout* section. Later, discuss these 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 their social studies, science and language arts classes, so students can apply new skills to each subject area. Have students write sentences explaining what they are reading.

Give students short texts from either social studies, science and language arts classes. Have students work in pairs to create additional sentences that could be inserted into each text.

Suggest students read something they like for an extra 20 minutes a day on weekends.

Ask students to keep a reading journal.

Have students imagine they are making up reading/vocabulary questions for a 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.

Have students imagine they are creating a crossword puzzle for a Merit program being used. Tell them to choose words from classroom material, then work in pairs to write, draw and design their own vocabulary puzzles.

Tell students to work in small groups to act out what they are reading for social studies and language arts class. Ask them to take turns performing for other groups.

Organize students into small groups for games of charades based on passages in science class.

Return to the software and let students try Merit's *Finals*, to help prepare for and demystify 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.