

# COMPREHENSION & IMAGERY

2 critical components in reading,  
learning, memory & communication



[Visualizing and Verbalizing \(V/V\)](#) is a [research-based reading strategy](#) for parents and educators to utilize with children (or adults) who have trouble with reading comprehension. [Visualizing and Verbalizing](#) was created by Nanci Bell, an expert in the treatment of language and literacy disorders who is one of the co-founders of Lindamood-Bell learning centers in USA.

Many readers can read words and have a developed vocabulary, but still struggle to comprehend sentences or paragraphs. [Visualizing and Verbalizing](#) teaches students who struggle with reading comprehension and language processing to build pictures in their minds as they listen to or read text, with the ultimate goal of being able to visualize the main idea or get the whole picture. This is called **concept imagery**. As Albert Einstein said, "If I can't picture it, I can't understand it."

**Here are some signs that your child or student has difficulty processing language and would likely benefit from learning about concept imagery:**

- No response to verbal explanations
- Trouble understanding jokes
- Repeatedly asks questions that have already been answered
- Misses the main ideas from TV shows or has trouble guessing what might happen, only retaining a few details
- Difficulty understanding cause and effect
- Trouble paying attention during lectures or conversations
- Trouble remembering or following verbal directions
- Trouble making sense when talking
- Does not express self often, seems quiet much of the time
- Can read words fluently but has trouble comprehending what he/she reads

When reading, the information seems abstract to readers who have trouble processing language. Abstract information can be very difficult to understand so the text goes in one ear and out the other, so to speak. When creating mental images of the text, the reader draws from his own experiences and knowledge (text-to-self

connections) and the meaning becomes meaningful and concrete. This makes it easier to process the information, recall it later, and put the information into one's own words. Additionally, when asked inferential questions about the text (e.g., what do you think will happen next), the reader can refer to his mental image, which will help facilitate his ability to answer these types of questions.

### **So How Does the Visualizing and Verbalizing Strategy Work?**

In [Visualizing and Verbalizing](#), readers are first taught to describe real pictures presented in front of them. Once they have mastered the ability to describe real pictures, readers practice describing objects they have seen in their own life, that are not directly in front of them (e.g., their house, a pet, a piece of jewellery, etc.). The teacher asks the students several probing questions to help them describe familiar or personal objects in vivid detail. After students can accurately describe familiar or personal objects, they are taught to create mental images of simple sentences, paragraphs, and eventually the whole text. The teacher/parent guides the reader to process language visually, and express their images verbally, by asking probing questions about what they imagine from the text. Research suggests that both sides of the brain need to be stimulated and engaged in order to make sense of reading, and that is exactly what this process does. (March 29, 2014)

