

# Ten Surprising *Facts About Reading*:

**1 out of every 3 Americans, over 90 million people, struggles with Reading**

1. 98% of reading is an auditory/listening task. **Only 2% of reading is visual.** Listening to a story and reading that same story will activate the exact same pathways in the brain. It's not where the sensory information comes from but, where it ends up in the brain. **Our eyes act more like ears when we read.**

2. **Seven out of eight students** with reading problems **in first grade** continue to struggle with reading in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. They get better but never catch up. **Improving listening skills is often the easiest route to improving reading skills.**

3. **Think things are different for teens and adults? Think again.** The teen brain doesn't radically shift when a student leaves elementary school. Almost all teens and adults with reading problems suffer from untreated auditory problems. Listening issues are at the root of fluency and comprehension difficulties.

4. **Listening skills,** including: phonemic awareness (hearing all the sounds in a spoken word), auditory attention, auditory sequencing, and listening vocabulary are the **most important factors in natural reading.** Teachers often notice that the child who has a hard time listening to a story also struggles to read.

5. **The biggest barrier to comprehension is lack of fluency.** Less than 15% of learning disabled students have comprehension problems if they read accurately and read faster than 80 words a minute. The National Reading Panel found that comprehension instruction should be only taught after reading accuracy and fluency are mastered. It is like teaching a child how to steer a bike before they learn how to pedal.

6. The National Reading Panel found that **phonics instruction was of marginal benefit** unless a student has well-developed phonemic awareness. This is why some first graders pick up phonics in months and struggling readers can take years. Oh! The pain.

7. **English is the most difficult major language to listen to (comprehend) and to read.** For struggling readers, listening to English can be like listening to a foreign language you haven't quite mastered.

8. The next advances in reading instruction will **not come from what is taught but how reading is taught.** *Improving reading skills* and *reading instruction* will advance when we are no longer forced to choose between the two dominant theories in reading education today "reading will improve reading" vs. "drilled instruction". Advances in the cognitive sciences, such as reduced error learning and distributed instruction, will ensure that all students learn to read.

9. The main reason English is so difficult to speak, listen to and to read is because spoken English has an **exceptional number of vowel sounds (phonemes)**. The ability to hear and identify individual sounds is what separates natural readers from struggling readers. Many weak readers struggle with spelling and most of their errors - not surprisingly -- are with vowels.

10. Students who **read at a lower grade level are at serious academic risk.** The kids who read *Harry Potter* in fourth grade aren't "average fourth grade " readers.