



## Using structured literacy approaches with Junior Journals

This guide explores ways to use Junior Journals to teach the three strands in phase one of the refreshed [English learning area \(ELA\)](#): oral language, reading, and writing.

Junior Journals can be used to support students' development of fluent and independent reading as they transition from early instructional readers to the collection format of the School Journal. Many of the texts in the Junior Journal series come with audio files and digital versions for flexible use with students.

Junior Journals are designed primarily for year 3 students and have the following characteristics:

- a mix of fiction and non-fiction texts of varying lengths
- explicit and implicit content within texts and illustrations
- some unfamiliar words and phrases
- a variety of sentence structures
- ideas and information organised in paragraphs
- text and visual features like subheadings, text boxes, footnotes, glossaries, diagrams, and maps
- content that requires critical analysis.

Regardless of decoding proficiency, all students need to access year-level texts to develop literacy skills and knowledge alongside their peers. Ways to remove barriers to texts include providing audio versions, working with small flexible groups to explore the content of the text together, and using print-to-speech software. The refreshed [ELA](#) provides further guidance on noticing, recognising, and responding to students' strengths and needs.

### Structured literacy approaches

Applying structured literacy approaches to Junior Journals is an effective way to build students' essential literacy knowledge and skills. The table below offers ideas for how you could use Junior Journals to teach elements of structured literacy approaches. These ideas come from the phase one progress outcomes and teaching sequence of the refreshed [ELA](#). Use the refreshed [ELA glossary](#) to find the meaning of any unfamiliar words and phrases.

**Important note:** For students who need additional teaching to accelerate their decoding skills, continue to provide frequent, explicit practice of targeted knowledge and skills in small flexible groups. Detailed diagnostic assessments to find out what students already know and need to learn next will assist you to form small flexible groups around specific decoding needs.

## Vocabulary

Support students to:

- understand new words in Junior Journals by giving them student-friendly definitions that connect to their experiences
- hear, pronounce, read, and write new words correctly
- ask questions about unfamiliar words and use knowledge of context clues, prefixes, and root words to understand new vocabulary
- use knowledge from other learning areas and topics to determine the meaning of unknown words and phrases.

**Teaching tip:** Before reading a text with students, select 3-5 useful words. Choose sophisticated, high-utility words and content-specific vocabulary. Explicitly teach these words before, during, and after reading.

## Morphology

Support students to:

- recognise how some words in Junior Journals can be broken down into meaningful parts by identifying and decoding affixes and base words
- notice how base words become new words with the addition of different affixes and understand the meaning of common affixes, for example, re-, un-, dis-, -er, -est, -ly, -less, and -ful.

**Teaching tip:** Identify a prefix or a suffix on a page of text, and tell students to find a word with that affix on that page. Then work with the students to use other affixes with the base word to create new words.

## Syntax

Support students to:

- understand the building blocks of simple, compound, and complex sentences, and find examples of different sentence types in texts
- identify and explain the purpose of punctuation features such as speech marks, commas, exclamation marks, and question marks.

**Teaching tip:** Introduce new sentence structures while students are reading about familiar material to reduce their cognitive load.

## Fluency

Support students to:

- read texts accurately, with expression, and at appropriate oral-reading fluency rates for their year-level
- respond to punctuation in texts and group words into phrases for expression, stress, and intonation
- practice fluency through choral reading, echo reading, partner reading, and repeated reading
- read a number of slightly different texts on the same topic to improve both comprehension and fluency.

**Teaching tip:** Model phrasing and expression by reading a sentence or short passage to show students what fluency sounds like. The audio files for Junior Journals can also be used as examples of fluent reading.

## Text structure

Support students to:

- explore how different texts are structured, the use of text features, and how language is used
- identify and explain the purpose of print and text features such as bold print, italics, titles, headings, images, and table of contents.

**Teaching tip:** When teaching students about text structures, use a text that they are familiar with so that they can focus on the structures and features of the text rather than its meaning.

## Comprehension

Support students to:

- identify the audience and purpose of texts
- read and hold meaning across longer sentences and between sentences
- monitor their understanding of a range of texts and repair meaning by adjusting reading speed, rereading, visualising, checking, decoding, and asking and answering questions about the text
- identify the central message or main idea in a text, and provide key details in sequence
- make use of stated and implied information or ideas to draw inferences and make meaning
- discuss how language, text features, and visual images are used to influence feelings, thoughts, and actions.

**Teaching tip:** During reading, use think-alouds to model how to:

- use context clues
- summarise text
- make predictions and inferences using clues in the text and prior knowledge.

## Oral language

Support students to:

- participate in extended discussions to share opinions, personal thoughts, and feelings about the ideas in texts
- use precise nouns, verbs, and adjectives relating to content-specific topics in texts, for example, reproduce, aggressive, nocturnal
- retell stories from Junior Journals and incorporate narrative elements and sequential details
- experiment with adjusting tone, volume, and pace as they read texts out loud.

**Teaching tip:** Provide sentence starters as a scaffold to help students express their responses to texts. For example, “Llamas are interesting animals because ...”

## Writing processes

Use the texts in Junior Journals as writing models. Support students to analyse:

- the features and structures of different text types including stories, poems, reports, explanations, and persuasive texts
- how an author has chosen words and phrases that give clear details
- taught language features such as rhyme, alliteration, onomatopoeia, and simile
- how to improve word choices and sentence construction
- use of punctuation.

**Teaching tip:** Create a word wall with interesting language that you find in Junior Journals, with student-friendly definitions and examples. Encourage students to use these words and phrases in their own writing. Update the wall regularly with new language from texts you read together.

## Selecting books for your students

Ongoing, formative assessment of students’ word recognition and language comprehension skills will enable you to notice, recognise, and respond to students’ progress. Select texts to use from the Junior Journals to address students’ instructional needs in literacy. For example, when students are:

- building their vocabulary, select texts with rich language
- learning to recognise the difference between topic sentences and supporting details, select examples of information texts
- examining how similes, metaphors, and onomatopoeia help to communicate meaning, select a range of poems.

You could use Junior Journal texts on the same topic or theme to support extended discussions of content knowledge and perspectives.

Fluent readers should predominantly be working with year-level texts. However, when new skills and concepts are being introduced you could use simple texts to reduce cognitive load and use more complex texts to provide enrichment.

## Resources coming soon

Ministry of Education resources published in 2025 to support teaching using structured literacy approaches include:

- › revised teacher support materials to help you use structured literacy approaches with the Instructional Series
- › teacher manuals on structured literacy approaches
- › phonics cards for the Māhuri | Sapling phase and more Ready to Read Phonics Plus student books
- › CHAPTERS, Junior Journals, and School Journals.

These resources will be distributed to schools and/or made available on [Tāhūrangi](#) in 2025.

Find more information and links to resources at [Structured Approaches to Literacy – New Zealand Curriculum - Tāhūrangi](#)



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