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**What do we know about adults who struggle with their reading and can we help them improve their reading skills?**

An intervention designed to address the reading problems of adult learners was developed and administered. To evaluate potential efficacy, we compared outcomes from our research intervention with those from standard instruction. Specifically, 320 adults, reading between the third and seventh grades, participated in research classes (N = 233) or their usual literacy classes (N = 87). Research classes offered a blend of teacher-led and computer-based reading instruction. All participants were assessed before and after 100 hours of instruction on standardised and experimental reading tests. Descriptive and correlational analyses were conducted. Analyses illustrated the adults' extreme reading-related deficits, their lack of successful integration of skills, and the importance of considering age and English speaking status in this population. The intervention had its greatest impact on learners' decoding skills, and learners expressed a desire for more decoding training. This signifies the importance of decoding instruction in adult literacy programs. Failure to demonstrate changes in reading comprehension may be due to problems in measuring comprehension in this population.