

Holy Cross students participate in the Accelerated Reader (AR™) program. This guide is designed to answer your questions about AR. If you have additional questions, please feel free to contact your child's reading teacher or visit the Accelerated Reader Web site at www.renlearn.com.

WHAT IS ACCELERATED READER (AR)?

AR is a computer program that helps teachers manage and monitor children's independent reading practice. Your child picks a book at his/her own level and reads it at his/her own pace. When finished, your child takes a short quiz on the computer. (Passing the quiz is an indication that your child understood what was read.) AR gives both children and teachers feedback based on the quiz results, which the teacher then uses to help your child set goals and direct ongoing reading practice. Children using AR choose their own books to read, rather than having one assigned to them. This makes reading a much more enjoyable experience as they can choose books that are interesting to them. Teachers help your child choose books at an appropriate reading level that are challenging without being frustrating, ensuring that your child can pass the quiz and experience success.

If your child does not do well on the quiz, the teacher may help him:

- Choose another book that is more appropriate.
- Ask more probing questions as your child reads and before he takes a quiz.
- Pair your child with another student, or even have the book read to your child.

In most cases, children really enjoy taking the quizzes. Since they're reading books at their reading and interest levels, they are likely to be successful. This is satisfying for most children. Best of all, they learn and grow at their own pace.

HOW MUCH WILL MY CHILD READ DURING THE SCHOOL DAY?

According to research, children who read at least 20 minutes a day with a 90% comprehension rate on AR quizzes see the greatest gains. Therefore, your child should have at least 20 minutes set aside for reading during each school day.

HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD BECOME A BETTER READER?

As with anything, performance improves with practice. Encourage your child to read at home. Create a culture of reading in your household by reading with your child, starting a home library, visiting your local library or bookstore on a regular basis, letting your child see you reading, and discussing books that each of you has read. When reading with your child, stop and ask questions to be sure your child is comprehending what is read. Reading with your child, no matter what the child's age, is an important part of developing a good reader, building a lifelong love of reading and learning, and creating a loving relationship between you and your child. Make learning a family affair!

WHAT IF MY CHILD DOESN'T LIKE READING?

Using Accelerated Reader, your child will choose the books he/she wants to read. The teacher will assist the child by suggesting reading levels, so that after completing the book, your child should do well on the AR Reading Practice Quiz. Success on the quiz will encourage your child to read more. With guidance from the teacher, and success, even students who say they don't like reading will develop a love of reading.

WILL MY CHILD HAVE TO READ A BOOK I DON'T WANT HIM/HER TO READ?

No. There are many, many choices of books at your child's level. He/she will never be forced to read a book you find questionable.

I'M CONCERNED THAT MY CHILD WILL BE UNFAIRLY COMPARED TO OTHERS.

AR allows the teacher to perform individual assessments. Students using AR are encouraged to progress at their own pace and set their own goals with the help of the teacher. The aim of AR is for all children to succeed in achieving their goals (for percentage and points).

HOW DOES THE SCHOOL DETERMINE MY CHILD'S READING LEVEL?

Teachers may determine your child's reading level in one of several ways: a STAR Reading™ test, a grade equivalent score from a standardized test, using their best professional judgment based on their knowledge of your child, or the Scantron test results.

WHAT IS A STAR READING TEST?

STAR Reading is a computerized reading assessment that uses computer-adaptive technology. Questions continually adjust to your child's responses. If the child's response is correct, the difficulty level is increased. If the child misses a question, the difficulty level is reduced. The test uses multiple-choice questions and takes approximately 10 minutes.

WHAT IS AN ATOS BOOK LEVEL?

Book levels are reported using the ATOS™ readability formula and represent the difficulty of the text. For example, an ATOS book level of 4.5 means that the text could likely be read by a student whose reading skills are at the level of a typical fourth grader during the fifth month of school.

WHAT IS A ZONE OF PROXIMAL DEVELOPMENT (ZPD)?

In independent literature-based reading, ZPD is the range of books that will challenge a child without causing frustration or loss of motivation. Your child will receive a ZPD range after taking a STAR Reading test, or teachers can use their best professional judgment to determine a ZPD. It's important for children to read with a high degree of comprehension and within their ZPDs. ZPDs should be adjusted based on the needs of your child.

WHAT ARE AR POINTS?

Every book that has an AR Reading Practice Quiz is given a point value. AR points are computed based on the difficulty of the book (ATOS readability level) and the length of the book (number of words). For example, the Berenstain Bears books, which are about 1,000 words long and have an average ATOS book level of 3.5, are 0.5-point books. Hank the Cowdog, which is about 23,000 words long and has an average ATOS book level of 4.5, is a 3-point book. *The Sun Also Rises*, about 70,000 words long and at an ATOS book level of 4.4, is a 10-point book. You may notice that some popular books have more points assigned to them than some classic pieces of literature. Tom Clancy's *Executive Orders*, for example, is a 78-point book while Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is a 4-point book. Keep in mind that this doesn't mean we think *Executive Orders* is a better book or more worthwhile to read than *Macbeth*, only that—at 458,453 words vs. 19,048 words—it is much longer and provides more reading practice time.

0.5 pt. (944 words) 3 pt. (23,269 words) 10 pt. (67,707 words)

Children earn points, or a portion of a book's points, depending on how well they do on the Reading Practice Quiz. For example, a child who takes a 5-question quiz on a book worth 1 point will earn 1 point for 5 correct answers (100%), 0.8 point for 4 correct answers (80%), etc. A child who reads a book worth 5 points and takes a 10-question quiz will earn 5 points for 10 correct answers (100%), 4.5 points for 9 correct answers (90%), etc. A child needs to pass a quiz with a score of 60% or higher to earn points.

HOW ARE ACCELERATED READER POINT GOALS SET?

The Goal-Setting Chart provides guidelines for the approximate number of AR points children should be able to earn depending on how much time they read and their reading level. Monitoring AR points earned by children and comparing them to the guideline values listed on the Goal-Setting Chart enables your child's teacher to determine how well your child is using the time provided for reading practice.

HOW MANY ACCELERATED READER QUIZZES ARE THERE?

Holy Cross subscribes to Accelerated Reader Enterprise so there are over 130,000 AR quizzes available to our students.

WHAT KINDS OF QUIZZES ARE THERE?

Accelerated Reader includes several types of quizzes designed to support the development of several reading skills. Quiz types include:

Reading Practice Quizzes are the most common type of assessment in AR. The purpose of these quizzes is to determine whether your child has read a book, to measure his literal comprehension of the book, and to provide immediate feedback. Each Reading Practice Quiz consists of 5, 10, or 20 multiple-choice questions depending on book level and length. They are available in English, Spanish, and Recorded Voice formats.

Recorded Voice Quizzes are designed for beginning readers and students learning English. They are professionally recorded by a narrator who reads the quiz questions and answer choices as they appear on screen.

Vocabulary Practice Quizzes measure a child's command of vocabulary words encountered while reading. They are designed to reinforce vocabulary acquisition, assist with individualizing vocabulary instruction, and generate your child's interest in words through authentic, in-context literature experiences. Quizzes include 5, 10, or 15 words from a particular book as well as review words from previously read books. Vocabulary Practice Quizzes are available only in the Renaissance Place™ versions of Accelerated Reader.

Literacy Skills Quizzes are designed to give your child's teacher information on specific reading skills. Questions are randomly generated from a 36- or 60-item bank resulting in 12 or 24 quiz questions. Due to item-bank technology, Literacy Skills Quizzes can be taken up to three times. Quiz questions are based on 24 specific, higher-order reading comprehension skills from state standards, basal reading series, and standardized tests.

Other Reading Quizzes are designed to determine whether a child read and understood content in his textbook. Other Reading Quizzes are aligned to our textbooks series and are specifically linked to how textbooks and other materials are used in the class.

HOW WILL I KNOW IF A BOOK HAS AN AR QUIZ?

You can visit the AR BookFinder™ at arbookfind.com to conduct a search of all available books with AR quizzes.

HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD FIND BOOKS THAT ARE INTERESTING TO HIM/HER?

Visit arbookfind.com and click on Advanced Search. By conducting an advanced search, you can generate book lists that contain titles based on the criteria you enter such as book level, topic, interest level, fiction/nonfiction, etc.

IS IT OK FOR MY CHILD TO READ OUTSIDE OF HIS/HER READING LEVEL?

Just because a child can read the words in a book doesn't mean the content is appropriate. The interest level of the material must be considered. Interest level is based on content—a book's themes and ideas—and indicates for which age group a book is appropriate. The chart below shows which grades fall into each interest level.

Interest Level Grade Level

LG—Lower Grades K–3

MG—Middle Grades 4–8

MG+—Middle Grades Plus 6 and up

UG—Upper Grades 9–12

These are recommendations. It is the responsibility of teachers, librarians, and parents to use their best judgment when guiding children to appropriate books. In many cases, a book's interest level coordinates with its book level. Hank the Cowdog, for example, the content of which is suitable for fourth-graders, has a book level of 4.5. Many books, however, have a low book level but are appropriate for upper grades and vice versa. For example, Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* has a book level of 4.4 because its sentences are short and its vocabulary is simple. The interest level, however, is UG for Upper Grades. In contrast, *Arthur Throws a Tantrum* has a book level of 4.9 because it contains fairly long words and sentences, but it is intended for students in the lower grades.

MY CHILD ALREADY DOES WELL IN SCHOOL. WHY DOES HE/SHE NEED THIS?

Even if a child is gifted at playing a musical instrument, he/she has to practice to develop his/her talent. All children, need to be challenged. Teachers using AR software in their classrooms find it easy to guide each student to books that give the child both challenge and success, regardless of the child's level.

MY CHILD IS NOT A STRONG READER. CAN HE/SHE STILL USE ACCELERATED READER?

Accelerated Reader helps all children become better readers, from students with special needs to those who are gifted and talented. When children read books at an appropriate level, they experience success. Furthermore, teachers work with children to set appropriate goals based on each child's reading level.

HOW WILL I KNOW HOW MY CHILD IS DOING?

A TOPS Report prints automatically after a child takes a quiz to give you feedback on your child's understanding of the book and shows cumulative data for the marking period and school year. The TOPS Report is sent home with your child. You can access your child's AR information in Renaissance Home Connect™ from a computer with Web access. There is a link to Home Connect on the Holy Cross website. Once in the program, you can view your child's progress toward goals, points, and all books your child has read and since participating in the Accelerated Reader program. You can also access AR BookFinder to search for titles of interest. You can only access information about *your* child and will need to use their AR username/password to access the information.

WHAT IF I HAVE MORE THAN ONE CHILD USING ACCELERATED READER?

If you have more than one child in your home using AR, the information contained in the reports is only for the child you choose to view. You will need individual log-in information for each child.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT USING RENAISSANCE HOME CONNECT?

Holy Cross teachers are always available to answer parents' questions. You can contact your child's teacher through email or by telephone. Also, after logging in to Home Connect, there is a Help icon in the upper right-hand corner to assist you with navigating the webpage.