

LEFT SIDE STRONG LLC

Evidence-Based Practice in Action

Structured Language & Literacy

Module 1 — What Is Structured Language & Literacy?

Participant Workbook

Name: _____ Date: _____

How to use this workbook

Work through this alongside the Module 1 lesson and slides. Read each short section, then complete the reflection or practice that follows. There are no trick questions — the goal is to connect the science to your own classroom. Keep this workbook; you'll build on it across the course.

What you'll be able to do

1. Explain why reading is not a natural process — and why that changes how we teach it.
2. Describe the Simple View of Reading and Scarborough's Reading Rope in plain language.
3. Define “structured literacy” and recognize explicit, systematic, cumulative teaching.
4. Locate every strand of this course inside the reading brain.

1 · Reading is not natural

We are born wired for spoken language. Given people to talk with, almost every child learns to speak without being formally taught.

We are not born wired for print. Reading is a human invention only a few thousand years old. The brain has no dedicated “reading center” at birth — it has to build a reading network by connecting systems it already has: speech, the individual sounds of language, and printed letters.

Why this matters for teaching: Because the brain doesn't build this network on its own, reading has to be taught — explicitly and on purpose. Skilled reading is an achievement, not a stage children simply grow into.

Reflect

Think of a student who spoke fluently but struggled to read. In your own words, why might speaking come easily while reading does not?

2 · The Simple View of Reading

Reading comprehension has two ingredients, and you need both:

$$\text{Decoding} \times \text{Language Comprehension} = \text{Reading Comprehension}$$

- Decoding — turning printed words into spoken words.
- Language comprehension — understanding those words when spoken.

It's multiplication, not addition. If either ingredient is near zero, reading comprehension is near zero. That's why we grow both sides deliberately — strong phonics alone won't create a reader, and neither will rich discussion alone. (Gough & Tunmer, 1986)

Practice — match the profile

Match each student to the most likely need. Write the letter in the blank.

Student	Most likely need
Reads words accurately but can't answer questions about the text. ____	A. Decoding / phonics
Understands stories read aloud, but stumbles sounding out words. ____	B. Language & comprehension
Struggles both to sound out words and to follow read-alouds. ____	C. Both sides of the Simple View

Answers: B, A, C.

3 · Scarborough's Reading Rope

The Simple View names the two ingredients; the Reading Rope shows the strands inside each. As readers develop, word-recognition strands become more automatic and language-comprehension strands become more strategic — and they weave together into skilled, fluent reading. (Scarborough, 2001)

The strands

Language Comprehension	Word Recognition
Background knowledge	Phonological awareness
Vocabulary	Decoding (sound–symbol)
Language structures (syntax)	Sight recognition of familiar words
Verbal reasoning	
Literacy knowledge	

Reflect

Name one strand you feel you teach well, and one you'd like to strengthen this year.

4 · What “structured literacy” means

Structured literacy is a research-proven approach that teaches the strands of the Rope directly. Use this checklist to recognize it — and to reflect on your own practice.

In my teaching, instruction is...	Often	Not yet
Explicit — skills are taught clearly, not left to guessing.		
Systematic & cumulative — a planned sequence, simple to complex.		
Diagnostic & responsive — I check what students know and adjust.		
Multi-modal & engaging — students see, hear, say, and write.		

Try this · Audit your literacy block

For one week, notice where your minutes go. Estimate the time you spend supporting each side of the Simple View, then plan one small shift.

Day	Word recognition (min)	Language comprehension (min)
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		

One small shift I'll try next week

Key terms

Decoding — Turning printed words into spoken words using sound–symbol knowledge.

Language comprehension — Understanding spoken language — vocabulary, background knowledge, and how sentences work.

Simple View of Reading — Reading comprehension = decoding × language comprehension.

Reading Rope — Scarborough's model of the woven strands of skilled reading.

Structured literacy — Explicit, systematic, cumulative teaching of the language and literacy strands.

Phonological awareness — Hearing and manipulating the sounds of spoken language.

Key sources

Gough, P. B., & Tunmer, W. E. (1986). *Decoding, reading, and reading disability*. Scarborough, H. S. (2001). *Connecting early language and literacy to later reading (dis)abilities*. See also the work of Hollis Scarborough, Louisa Moats, and the National Reading Panel (2000).