Andrew Jennings
COMPREHENSION
NINJA

MASTERING COMPREHENSION: Photocopiable Activities to Improve Reading

FOR AGES 5–6

Bloomsbury

COMPREHENSION
NINJA
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ANDREW JENNINGS

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ALSO AVAILABLE FROM ANDREW JENNINGS
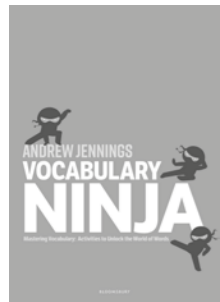
VOCABULARY NINJA

Vocabulary Ninja is an essential toolkit of strategies and resources to supercharge primary pupils and transform them into vocabulary ninjas! This practical book features theory, teaching approaches and photocopiable activities, as well as key topic vocabulary, etymology and phrases to bring the primary curriculum to life.

Go to www.vocabularyninja.co.uk and visit the book section to find out more.

You can find even more information about Vocabulary Ninja here:
Website – www.vocabularyninja.co.uk
Blog – vocabularyninja.wordpress.com
Twitter – @VocabularyNinja
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SENTENCE SAMURAI

A unique whole-school modeling tool for writing and sentence construction. The app models the expansion of basic sentences to more complex and detailed ones. Each set of sentences has been carefully written to match the National Curriculum's writing requirements and expectations of each year group – Year 1 through to Year 6 in one app!

For more information, see:
Website – www.sentencesamurai.co.uk
Twitter – @SentenceSamurai

VOCABULARY NINJA WORD OF THE DAY APP

A new Word of the Day is released every day! You can get the Word of the Day straight to your smartphone or tablet, making Word of the Day even more accessible on the go or in school. It's perfect for supporting your immersive classroom environment, where every word counts.

VOCAB LAB APP

The Vocab Lab app offers an exciting and engaging way for pupils to explore vocabulary and the possible alternatives for common vocabulary choices. The app contains over 600 alternatives, supported by a child-friendly layout, and has been downloaded over 150,000 times. Simply visit the App Store on your iPad™, search for 'Vocab Lab' and download the app for free.

INTRODUCTION

Comprehension Ninja is designed to be a core part of your arsenal for teaching reading comprehension skills. *Comprehension Ninja* specifically focuses on the retrieval of information, using eight core comprehension skills that underpin the reading domains set out by the National Curriculum. This book contains 24 non-fiction texts that align themselves to the primary National Curriculum, the corresponding foundation subjects and subsequent topics taught within them. As the new curriculum develops, a greater focus has been placed on how pupils retain the knowledge they have learned within all lessons. *Comprehension Ninja* will allow schools to further embed reading opportunities across the curriculum while reinforcing the retention of pupil knowledge via the eight skills found below.

High-quality retrieval skills are the foundation of reading comprehension. If pupils can effectively and efficiently locate and retrieve information, then from there, inference, sequencing and explanation-type questions can be accessed. Without being able to retrieve information, none of this is possible. Many years ago, before SATs, these skills were known as comprehension skills! Now, sadly, they are known as question types. But the key principles still apply – and the eight skills below need to be taught, practised and mastered.

- Labelling
- Matching
- Fill in the gap
- Multiple choice
- True or false
- Find and copy
- 123 Sequencing
- Underline or highlight

Most comprehension texts bombard pupils with a range of question types that they have not yet had time to master – meaning they quickly encounter questions they cannot answer. *Comprehension Ninja* places the emphasis on teachers to teach and model each skill, while pupils develop their understanding of each question type individually.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book contains 24 non-fiction texts for you to use in your classroom. Texts 1 to 12 have eight subsequent pages of questions built around each comprehension skill. These texts and questions have been created so that you can specifically target and teach each individual skill, and then have a plethora of questions for pupils to work on and answer. In maths, you wouldn't jump from division one day into 3D shapes the next. The same must apply to reading – we should teach each skill and give pupils the opportunities to practise and master these skills before we move on. You now have in your hands 12 texts and associated questions to teach each skill – that's a minimum of 96 lessons from the first 12 texts.

Texts 13 to 24 look more like a traditional test. Each text has a corresponding set of questions. Each set of questions requires the pupil to use the comprehension skills mastered from texts 1 to 12. You could choose to use these texts formatively across the year to inform which skills require further attention, but here lies a fantastic opportunity for pupils to apply their new skills to each question type independently and with confidence. Don't allow pupils to flounder: if they require support, give it – teach!

It is important to note that this resource hasn't been designed to be a testing tool, but rather a teaching and learning tool. A tool where teachers support pupils to access texts and to master the eight comprehension skills. However, because of the nature of testing in schools, it is important that children see and experience test-type texts and questions as they will from texts 13 through 24. Because of the versatility of this resource, it really is up to you how it is used. Plus, as pupils grow in confidence and skill level, they will relish completing these activities.

PROGRESSION AND DEVELOPMENT OF SKILLS

Normally, teachers and leadership teams love to see a polished skill development matrix that shows how each skill becomes more complex as the pupil learns and grows. The way that *Comprehension Ninja* grows in difficulty is via the complexity and length of the texts. The vocabulary in the book for ages 7–8 is more challenging than the vocabulary in the book for ages 5–6, for example. Some texts will include statutory words from the National Curriculum, plus a range of technical vocabulary related to each different subject. The length of texts that pupils are exposed to falls in line with statutory assessments at Year 2 and Year 6, growing in increments each year, thus increasing the demands on the pupil to retrieve information with accuracy and speed from larger and more complex texts.

Approximate text length progression in the *Comprehension Ninja* series:

Ages 5-6:	100-150 words
Ages 6-7:	200-250 words
Ages 7-8:	300-450 words
Ages 8-9:	500-600 words
Ages 9-10:	650-700 words
Ages 10-11:	700-800 words

PRE-READING AND KEY INFORMATION TO IDENTIFY IN THE TEXT

Ideally, before answering questions, we want to teach pupils to pre-read a text and identify key information in the text.

Pupils need to adopt a positive reading position, sat up straight and ready to read. Prompt children to read with their pencil, so they move it across the page underneath each line as they read it. This means that when it comes to underlining a key piece of information, their pencil is already in the correct location – it's efficient. If pupils need to look away from the text to pick up the pencil, they will need to relocate the key information and time will be lost in every instance they perform this inefficient action.

We often ask pupils to underline key information as they read, but what is this key information?

Names of people, places, companies, events, teams, etc.

Dates including days, months, years, times and periods of time from beginning to end.

Statistics and numbers including percentages, fractions, amounts, figures, etc.

Unknown vocabulary – words pupils don't understand. Identifying them may still help pupils answer a question.

Headings, subheadings and images help direct readers to the correct area of the text when answering a question.

As pupils read through the text with their pencils, we want to train them to underline these pieces of key information. A good guideline as to how much to underline is three to six pieces per paragraph. Key information should be single words, or small groups of words, not full sentences. Model this skill to pupils and discuss why you have underlined this information, referring back to the information above.

KEYWORDS IN THE QUESTION

Once we have read the text and underlined key information, we can begin to answer questions about it. We now need to teach pupils to spot the keyword or phrase in a question. This is a word or phrase that signposts where to look in the text to find the answer. In the example question below, the keyword or phrase is **Morse code**.

*How did soldiers effectively use **Morse code** during World War II?*

If pupils have pre-read the text effectively, Morse code should be underlined, or they may even remember where it is mentioned. Pupils would skim (see below) the text to find the paragraph in which Morse code is mentioned, then scan that section for the exact word or phrase. Once located, pupils should be trained to read the sentence that comes before and the sentence after the one that contains the keyword or phrase. Doing this will give pupils a much greater chance of answering successfully.

In the example question, 'soldiers' or 'World War II' are not the keyword or phrase as it is likely that they would be mentioned numerous times throughout the text and would not help the reader locate the answer.

This is another instance where underlining unknown vocabulary could be effective. Pupils may not understand what Morse code is. However, they can see that it is a proper noun and should underline it when pre-reading as it is a name and unknown vocabulary. They can still answer the question correctly and receive a mark by efficiently locating the information and reading around the keyword, even though they may have no understanding of what Morse code actually is.

SKIMMING AND SCANNING

To be a good retriever of information, pupils must be able to locate information quickly. By skimming and scanning a text efficiently and methodically, pupils will have a much higher chance of locating the information they require.

It's crucial to agree a shared language amongst staff as to what skimming and scanning is. We don't want to use the phrase 'skimming and scanning' without everyone, including pupils, being very clear on what this means.

Skimming is a whole text process. Pupils skim across the text to locate a specific paragraph or area where the required information is likely to be. Skimming is like looking at the chapters of a DVD and choosing which one to start from. We won't necessarily find the answer when skimming, but we hope to locate the correct area of the text.

When asking pupils to skim the text to find the correct area, try asking them to remember first whether the information was in the beginning, the middle or the end of the text. Is there an image or a subheading that can help them skim the text? These strategies can help signpost pupils to the correct area of the text, thus increasing their chances of being successful in answering the question.

Scanning is then looking at that specific section with a greater level of scrutiny, possibly looking for a keyword or phrase. Following the film example, this is like watching a specific film chapter to locate the required information.

> **NINJA NOTES**
> Introduce skimming and scanning with images, timetables, TV schedules, poems, lists, visual instructions, hidden word pictures. Ask pupils to locate specific items, objects and information – add a time limit to increase the fun factor.

LABEL / DRAW AND LABEL

Labelling asks pupils to look at an image and label parts of the image with a word from a word bank. As the skill develops, pupils will be asked to label statements with information retrieved from across a whole text. Identifying keywords in the statement or question is essential here.

Draw and label requires pupils to draw an image based on the information they have read and then to label it. The quality of the drawing here isn't necessarily important, focus on the accuracy of the retrieved labels.

> **NINJA NOTES**
> Increase the difficulty of labelling by asking pupils to label more complex images without a word bank, but a short paragraph of text. Alternatively, use draw and label as part of your literacy lessons – read and share small yet detailed parts of the book you are using as part of your unit of work. For a task, ask pupils to draw what the text describes, then add labels. Share and discuss the differences in pupils' work and examples of effective labelling.

MATCHING

Matching is a simple skill where pupils are required to match together pieces of information that are in a jumbled state. Pupils must match the information together by drawing lines to the associated pieces of information. The activity becomes more challenging as pupils have a greater number of possible statements to match and larger texts to refer to in order to confirm the match.

> Ask pupils to identify the keyword in each statement and then locate this in the text by skimming and scanning. Matching pair games are a great way of introducing this skill to younger pupils. Older pupils might benefit from this skill as part of a starter in foundation subject lessons. They could match information associated with the topic on cut up pieces of paper, thus embedding reading skills and providing an opportunity for pupils to demonstrate foundation subject knowledge.

FILL IN THE GAP

Pupils are given a sentence with a missing word. Pupils will need to locate this sentence in the text and identify the missing word. This skill becomes progressively more difficult as the amount of text increases and as the pupils are given fewer options to choose from.

> **NINJA NOTES**
> Practise this skill regularly by giving pupils a page of their reading book and the same page with multiple words blanked out. Prompt pupils to spot keywords in each sentence to locate the specific sentences efficiently.

MULTIPLE CHOICE

These questions require pupils to choose an answer from a selection of three or four possible answers. Prompt pupils to locate the required information by spotting keywords in the question and locating them in the text, then reading around this information to find the correct answer.

> **NINJA NOTES**
> Train pupils via discussion to discount illogical answers using what they already know from the pre-read of the text. Also ensure that pupils don't answer questions using their own knowledge of the subject. Prompt pupils to 'prove it' by showing where the exact information is found in the text. This type of question could also be played in the style of a 'Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?' or 'Million Pound Drop' game, where pupils have multiple answers to choose from based on a text of your own choice.

TRUE OR FALSE

Pupils will be given a statement and asked if it is true or false. Younger year groups will begin to learn this skill by answering yes or no, before progressing to true or false.

> **NINJA NOTES**
> Ensure pupils are not guessing. Train pupils to spot the keyword in the question and locate this information in the text. By reading around this information, pupils will be able to discover whether the statement is true or false.

123 SEQUENCING

These questions require pupils to sequence information in the order it occurs in the text, from first to last. Younger pupils order the words in single sentences, progressing to pupils ordering information from across a whole text.

> **NINJA NOTES**
> Teach pupils to allocate each word or statement (usually no more than five) a symbol – a square, a triangle, a rectangle, a star and a cross. Pupils should then find these statements in the text and mark the corresponding symbol on the text. Once pupils have done this, it is easy to look at the text and see which symbol comes first, second, third and so on. A very effective strategy to help pupils effectively sequence information.

FIND AND COPY

These word-level questions require pupils to identify a word when provided with a contextual description rather than a contextless definition. Pupils will need to use keywords to locate the correct area of the text and then find and copy the correct word. In answering these questions, pupils may need to use a small amount of inference. Pupils may be directed to a certain part of the text at the beginning of the question, e.g. *Look at the paragraph beginning 'These word-level questions…'.*

Example: Look at the paragraph beginning *'The voyage aboard'*. Find and copy a word that suggests that the animals Darwin collected had been dead for millions of years. Answer: fossil.

> **NINJA NOTES**
> This skill is much more challenging than its name suggests. Teach pupils to follow the instructional part of the question to locate the correct area of the text efficiently. Although counterintuitive, teaching pupils to apply a 'best guess' approach if they are struggling to find the correct word is still a worthwhile strategy and will more often than not produce a correct answer.

UNDERLINE OR HIGHLIGHT

This skill requires pupils to locate words based on an explicit definition of the word. Pupils may be required to underline words from a single sentence or from a chosen paragraph of the text.

> **NINJA NOTES**
> Regularly discuss definitions, play matching games where pupils match words and definitions, and apply the 'best guess' strategy where pupils answer with their own logic without necessarily knowing the answer for certain. Teach Vocabulary Ninja's Word of the Day every day and be sure to explore definitions. Give pupils increasingly difficult words and ask them to create a definition of the word without using the word itself. You can also encourage them to start the definition with 'If someone is…' or 'If something is…'.

1 SUPER SENSES

Humans have five basic senses. They help us to see, hear, smell, touch and taste our world!

We use our eyes for sight. We use sight to read, watch films and see our families.

We can also see danger.

We use our ears for hearing. They let us hear things like music and talking.

We can also hear sirens and fire alarms.

We use our noses for smelling. They let us smell things like food and flowers.

We can also smell dangerous smoke and gas.

We feel touch with our skin. We can feel things like smoothness and softness.

We can also feel if things are hot or painful.

We use our tongues for taste. We can taste things like sugar, salt and sour lemons.

We can also taste if food has gone bad.

Our senses help us understand things around us. They can also keep us safe!

ALARM

Ouch. That's hot!
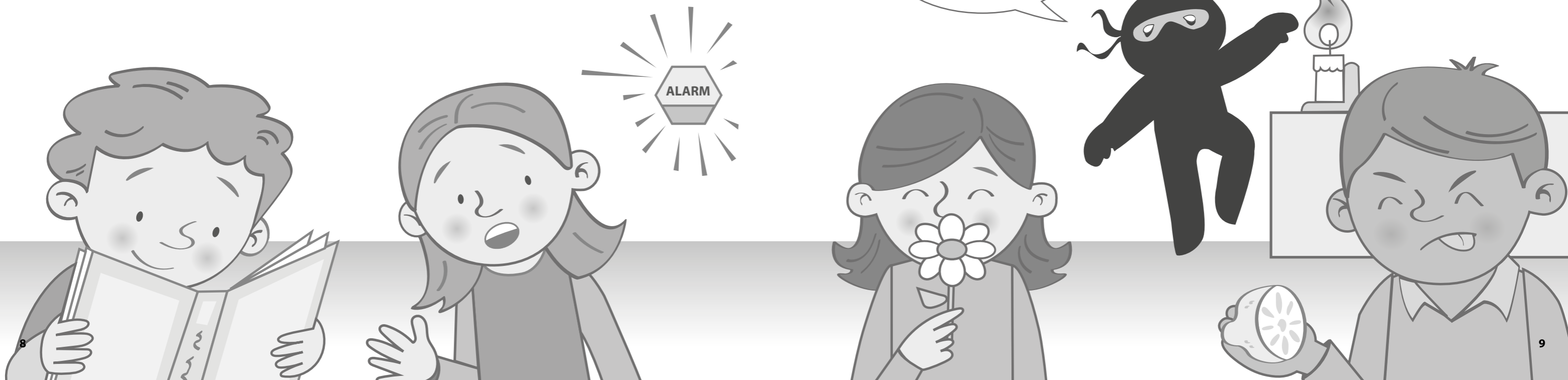
SKIM AND SCAN

This question is about *Super senses*.

Use your ninja reading eyes to spot these words in the text. Circle the words when you find them.

humans	world	sight
read	alarm	smell
flowers	smoke	touch
hot	painful	taste
lemons	bad	safe

LABEL AN IMAGE
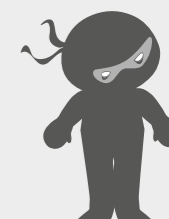
Look at the image below.

Label the image with words from the word bank.
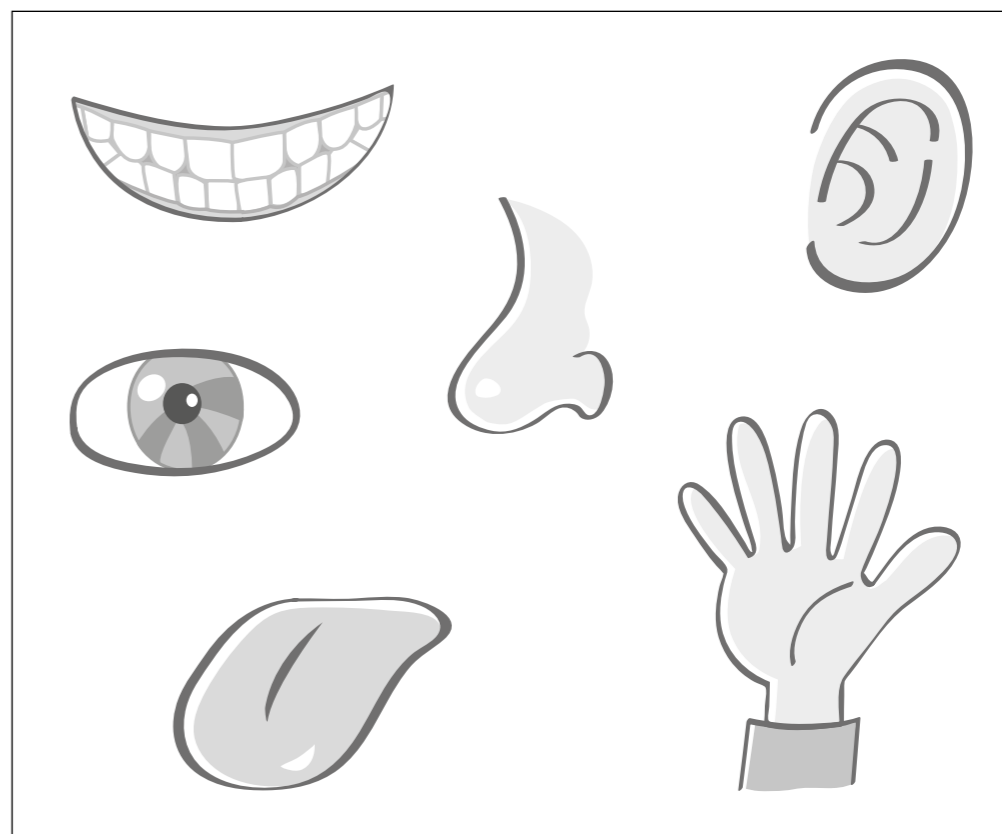
Word bank

nose	eye	ear
hand	teeth	tongue

DRAW AND LABEL

Draw the statement in the boxes.

Add your own labels to your drawing.

eyes	mouth and teeth
ears	nose

MATCHING

Draw a line with a ruler to match the information. One has already been done for you.

eyes can	•	hear
a nose can	•	see
skin can	•	smell
ears can	•	feel

Draw a line with a ruler to match the information.

Humans can hear	•	sirens and alarms
Humans can see	•	smooth and hot
Humans can taste	•	sweet and sour
Humans can feel	•	films and families

Draw a line with a ruler to match the information.

food and drink	•	feel
smoke and gas	•	taste
pain and heat	•	smell
music and talking	•	hear

✏ FILL IN THE GAP

FILL IN THE GAP USING A WORD BANK

Read each sentence and choose the correct word to fill the gap.
Look back at *Super senses* to find the correct answer.

Our ears help us to hear _____ .

hear	smell	music	smoke

They let us _____ things like music and talking.

hear	see	smell	sense

As we feel things, our _____ tells us what it feels like.

hair	nose	skin	eyes

We taste _____ using our tongue.

sounds	rough and smooth	food and drink	books and films

FILL IN THE GAP

Look back at *Super senses*.

Skim to find the correct area or paragraph of the text. Then scan to locate the correct sentence. Fill in the gap with the missing word.

We use our _____ for hearing.

We can feel things like _____ and softness.

Our senses _____ us understand things around us.

◎ MULTIPLE CHOICE

Circle the correct answer to the following questions.

What sense do we use to see the world?

hearing	taste	sight	touch

How many basic senses do humans have?

four	seven	five	two

What keeps us safe in the world?

sight	all senses	hearing	taste

Which sense tells us if food has gone bad?

touch	sight	taste	hearing

What do our eyes help us to see?

music	talking	films	softness

Which body part do humans use to taste food and drink?

ears	eyes	hair	tongue

Which body part do humans use to hear music?

ears	eyes	nose	tongue

⚡ TRUE OR FALSE

Read the sentences. Put a tick in the correct box to show which sentences are true and which are false.

Sight helps us read.   True ☐   False ☐

Sounds go into your mouth.   True ☐   False ☐

Humans can taste sugar, salt and sour tastes.   True ☐   False ☐

People use their ears to hear sirens and fire alarms.   True ☐   False ☐

FIND AND COPY

Read the sentences below. Find and copy three words that tell us how something feels.

We feel touch with our skin. We can feel things like smoothness and softness. We can also feel if things are hot or painful.
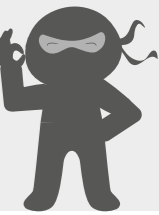
1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Read the sentences below. Find and copy three things that you can hear.

We use our ears for hearing. They let us hear things like music and talking. We can also hear sirens and fire alarms.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

123 SEQUENCING

Write the numbers 1 to 3 to show the order this information appears in the text *Super senses*.

We use our ears for hearing.   ☐

We can also hear sirens and fire alarms.   ☐

We use our tongues for taste.   ☐

Write the numbers 1 to 3 to show the order this information appears in the text *Super senses*.

We can taste things like sugar, salt and sour lemons.   ☐

We can feel things like smoothness and softness.   ☐

We use sight to read, watch films and see our families.   ☐

Look at the sentences below. Write the numbers 1 to 4 to show the order the words occur in the sentences.

We use our tongues for taste. We can taste things like sugar, salt and sour lemons.

sugar	sour lemons	tongues	salt

We can feel things like smoothness and softness. We can also feel if things are hot or painful.

softness	painful	smoothness	hot