



Enhancing Students' Reading Comprehension Skills

Professors often think students already possess effective reading comprehension skills, yet because students now need to read and comprehend information outside of class in much greater depth than they had to in high school, reading skills need to be emphasized—and taught—across the curriculum. The following strategies and methods can help professors to prepare students for reading they will do.

Comprehension Strategies

Professors can share these strategies and can discuss and model effective reading in class. If certain strategies work well for a particular subject, professors can spend time early on in the quarter discussing and using those with their students.

- **Predict text content** – Read titles, subtitles, abstracts, author bios, etc., and infer what ideas might be presented in the text.
- **Determine important text content** – Note specific words or phrases that are important to the whole text. Ideas that are repeated and expanded upon are key, so take note of these.
- **Agree and/or disagree** – Mark areas of a text where you agree and also where you disagree. When marking these places, write down why you agree or disagree.
- **Find personal interest** – If you like a quote, an idea, a key point, write it down! Write down why this stands out to you as well.
- **Mark points of confusion** – Note sections that are confusing. Work to understand this content by rereading or reading ahead and coming back to the marked section. You can also list questions that you have about the section so you can ask those in class.
- **Reread for clarification** – Make a note of what you read multiple times and think about why you reread it. Were you distracted? Or did you just need to read it a few times to really understand?
- **Relate a text to prior knowledge** – If you know something about the topic, or an example from your knowledge pops up while you read, write it down.
- **Relate to something you read earlier in the text** – Note where things are repeated, sequential, or relative to an earlier idea or event. In longer texts, these help you to make connections within the reading.
- **Visualize the text** – Try to visualize the text. Are there graphs or photos? If not, try to draw a picture, mind maps, or your own symbols to help solidify knowledge.
- **Summarize textual information** – After each major section, try writing a 1-sentence summary. At the end, summarize everything with a few sentences. Then challenge yourself to actually talk about what you have read by summarizing the reading to a classmate or friend.
- **Clarify words** – Define unfamiliar words and restate their definitions in your own words.

Teaching Methods

Professors can also help to prepare students to be better readers before they work to comprehend complex texts. The following strategies can help to prepare students for complex reading assignments.

- **Explain why you have chosen to assign a text** – Is the text for a class discussion? A test? A project? Should students be looking for facts within this text or a broad thematic issue? What kinds of connections should students focus on while reading? Share this information with your students. If they are aware of why you assigned certain texts, they will be able to better focus their reading to that purpose.
- **Incorporate reading comprehension strategies authentically** – Teach reading strategies alongside the content of actual texts that you use in your courses. This will show your students how they can use the strategies with similar readings.
- **Practice with your students** – Model reading strategies during class. Share with students what inferences you have made or what prior knowledge you accessed while reading.
- **Assist in preparation** – Tell students how, where, and when you comprehend reading best. Is it at a desk in the afternoon? Or on the couch in the morning? This can help students to visualize where they might better comprehend the materials.

Consulted Texts

Falk-Ross, F. C. (2001). Toward the new literacy: Changes in college students' reading comprehension strategies following reading/writing projects. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 45(4), 288.

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