



## Reading Strategies: Use Your Time Effectively

The strategies can work for lots of texts, so try them out and see which ones work for you.

### Getting Prepared<sup>1</sup>

1. **Give yourself a rationale.** Know what you're reading and why. Is it a chapter, a news article, a poem, a speech? Why was it assigned? What will you be using it for? Writing a paper? A class discussion? A project or test? Answering these questions will give you more focus and purpose as you begin to read.
2. **End the electronic buzz.** Put away or turn off your electronics. Limiting this distraction is hard, but it really helps. This means no music—especially the kind with lyrics.
3. **Plan ahead.** Portion your time wisely. Is it a 50-page chapter of a textbook or a 10-page research article? Don't plan to read a lengthy text in one sitting.

### Reading With Purpose<sup>2, 3, 4, 5</sup>

1. **Highlighting = coloring:** Highlighting alone doesn't develop comprehension. Make certain to write notes and annotate, even if you love using highlighters. As you finish your reading, gather and synthesize your annotations. Write down some of the text's important words or concepts, a short summary, and page numbers of ideas and/or passages that were important.
2. **Reading comprehension strategies:** Good readers do all these all the time. Practice using as many of them as you can, and note which ones you already use—those are your strongest strategies. Try out some new ones with readings that are particularly difficult for you.
  - **Predict text content:** Read the title and try to guess details about the text. When you guess the plot twist, argument, or what information will be presented, write it down.
  - **Clarify words:** Look up words you don't know and restate dictionary definitions into your own words.
  - **Mark points of confusion:** Mark any confusing sections. Try rereading first. If that doesn't work, then try to finish the section or read ahead to see if it all fits together. If at the end of the reading you are still confused, bring your questions up in class.
  - **Reread for clarification:** Mark information and sections that you read multiple times. Also think about WHY you need to reread. Were you distracted? Were you thinking about something else? If you've read a few pages or many paragraphs and haven't



marked anything in a while, think about whether you're still really reading. Are you looking at words but not really reading them? You'll probably need to go back and review those pages.

- **Determine important text content:** Note specific words or phrases that are important to the whole text and to your purpose for reading. Items or ideas that are repeated and expanded upon are often important.
- **Ask questions:** Use the classic 6: who, what, where, when, why, and how. Force yourself to use one of each in each reading; eventually it will become habitual.
- **Relate the text to prior knowledge and your own opinion:** If you know something about the topic, or an example from your knowledge pops up while you read, write that down. These personal connections are especially useful for comprehension. And if you're reading a text with an opinion you don't agree with, analyze it with regard to how you intend to use it. Revisit that rationale and figure out what is really important to you and your purpose.
- **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 make connections within the reading.
- **Find personal interest:** If you like an idea, a quote, or a metaphor, mark that. If you're able to bring your interests to even the most boring text, you'll be able to understand the information better. And if something makes you angry or you disagree with an idea, mark that too!
- **Visualize the text:** Try to envision the setting of the text. Are there graphs or photos to help you? Study those! If not, try to imagine what is happening while you are reading. Draw a picture 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 briefly with a few sentences. And challenge yourself to actually talk about what you have read. If you can explain it quickly and clearly, you'll know that you have comprehended the information.

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<sup>1</sup> McWhorter, K. T., & Sember, B. M. (2012). *Essential reading skills preparing for college reading*. Retrieved from <http://www.pearsonhighered.com/product?ISBN=9780321850416>

<sup>2</sup> Baumann, J.F., Jones, L.A., & Seifert-Kessell, N. (1993). Using think alouds to enhance children's comprehension monitoring abilities. *The Reading Teacher*, 47, 184-193.

<sup>3</sup> Fielding, L. G., & Pearson, P. D. (1994). Synthesis of research / reading comprehension: What works. *Educational Leadership Teaching for Understanding*, 51(5), 62-68. Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/feb94/vol51/num05/Synthesis-of-Research-~Reading-Comprehension@-What-Works.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> Oster, L. (2001). Using the think-aloud for reading instruction. *The Reading Teacher*, 55, 64-69.

<sup>5</sup> Wilhelm, J. D. (2001). Navigating Meaning: Using Think-Alouds to Help Readers Monitor Comprehension. In *Improving Comprehension with Think-Aloud Strategies* (Chapter 4). Retrieved from <http://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/resource/495>

