

Aggressive Approaches to Reading Comprehension

Reading Comprehension Strategies

Skilled readers use a wide range of strategies while reading. Some of these include the SQ3R technique, flow-charting, summarization, questioning and predicting. Of particular interest is the ability of learners to learn reading strategies, and how these strategies should be taught. Bereiter and Bird (1985) conducted two studies, which investigated strategy use while reading. In the first they transcribed think aloud protocols of expert readers (university students thought out loud while reading) and found four central strategies they use when comprehension fails:

- **Restatement:**

1. Rephrasing using inferred equivalents where unknown words appear
2. Paraphrasing in simpler terms
3. Inferring super ordinate propositions
4. Paraphrasing with inserted referents
5. Periodic summarization

- **Backtracking**

1. Reread from beginning of confusing segment
2. Reread previously comprehended parts
3. Demanding relationships

- **Setting watchers (i.e. "wh" questions)**

1. Why? (Cause and effect)
2. What? (For what reason)
3. Where? (For orientation)
4. Links between topics (why, what, how, is this related)

- **Problem formulation**

1. Formulate comprehension failure into problem solving.

Review of SQ3R Techniques

Tips For Reading More Effectively

Much of homework is reading and studying material from your textbooks. The following steps will enable you to spend your time reading and studying the material in your textbook more effectively.

SURVEY- Gather the information necessary to focus and formulate goals.

1. Read the title - help your mind prepare to receive the subject at hand.
2. Read the introduction and/or summary - orient yourself to how this chapter fits the author's purposes, and focus on the author's statement of most important points.
3. Notice each boldface heading and subheading - organize your mind before you begin to read - build a structure for the thoughts and details to come.
4. Notice any graphics - charts, maps, diagrams, etc. are there to make a point - don't miss them.
5. Notice reading aids - italics, bold face print, chapter objective, end-of -chapter questions are all included to help you sort, comprehend, and remember.

• **QUESTION - Help your mind engage and concentrate.**

One section at a time, turn the boldface heading into as many questions as you think will be answered in that section. The better the questions, the better your comprehension is likely to be. You may always add further questions as you proceed. When your mind is actively searching for answers to questions it becomes engaged in learning.

• **READ - Fill in the information around the mental structures you've been building.**

Read each section (one at a time) with your questions in mind. Look for the answers, and notice if you need to make up some new questions.

• **RECITE - Retain your mind to concentrate and learn as it reads.**

After each section - stop, recall your questions, and see if you can answer them from memory. If not, look back again (as often as necessary) but don't go on to the next section until you can recite.

• **REVIEW - Refine your mental organization and begin building memory.**

Once you've finished the entire chapter using the preceding steps, go back over all the questions from all the headings. See if you can still answer them. If not, look back and refresh your memory, then continue.

REMEMBER: THE INFORMATION YOU GAIN FROM READING IS IMPORTANT. IF YOU JUST "DO IT" WITHOUT LEARNING SOMETHING, YOU'RE WASTING A LOT OF TIME.

TRAIN YOUR MIND TO LEARN!!!

Other Out of Class Study Tips

Class is out and the weekly lecture is over, but the work has just begun. Consider the following tips when it's time to hit the books and study what's in your lecture notes and textbooks.

Understand how you learn

Understanding and using your learning strengths and adjusting the settings in your study environment to suit you will make your study sessions more effective. For example, are you a morning or a night person? Figure out what time of day you study most efficiently and schedule your studying time for those times of day. Trying to study when you're sleepy or distracted isn't the best idea.

Be selective in your reading

If you'd like to be quicker in doing your reading, keep in mind that only some material is worth studying, and the rest is just worth skimming. Begin with an overview and getting a bigger picture and context of the book or reading by skimming through:

- **The table of contents;**
- **Book jacket;**
- **Introduction and conclusion;**
- **Key chapters;**
- **First and last paragraphs of each chapter.**

This will give you a sense of the overall theme of the book and the main point the author is making. Comprehension of where the author is going will help your speed of reading.

Ask questions continually

As you read, constantly be asking what's important and what's worth your attention. How does chapter relate to overall purpose of book? Is it a side road or central to the plot/thesis?

Focus on and mark key points

As you read, focus on key points and passages and mark them for quick reference. Underlining slows you down, so put marks in the margins. Use asterisks or arrows by key points, numbers for sequence of events.

Learn how to take breaks

Instead of talking on the phone, watching TV or surfing the Internet as a procrastination tool, avoid the guilt and plan activities you like as breaks and rewards. Set a goal of reading a certain amount of pages or completing a certain number of problems. When you've accomplished your goal, reward yourself by taking a break and doing something you enjoy. Think of things you'd like to do and make them incentives. Plan smaller breaks for smaller tasks and larger rewards for larger goals.

Learn to like what you do

Remember why you're doing it and why it's important. Is it a required class for your degree? Remind yourself of the career you'll have down the road with the help of that degree.

Study with a friend

Enlist a friend and study that dreaded subject together. If you're not spending the time loving the subject, at least you'll be spending the time with someone you at least like! Be accountable to that friend when you're not studying with them. Tell them if you call them up to just chat, they should ask you if you've done your reading first before they will chat.

References

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