

READING AND COMPREHENSION

A. Introduction

1. God, Creator of heaven and earth, chose the written Word as His primary method of communicating to those He loved and created in His image.
 - God, through His Spirit, inspired 44 authors to write 69 books to communicate God's heart to His people.
 - Devil wants you to convince you that you can't read, that you're a slow reader.
 - o He will attack a person's reading skills.
 - o Your words are powerful
 - Don't say, "I can't read."
 - Don't say, "I'm dumb."
2. If you can learn how to read, you can accomplish anything, understand anything.
 - There's nothing you cannot unlock and learn – in time – if you are persistent and learn how to read.
3. Reading is like driving a car.
 - You are going somewhere.
 - You have a destination.
4. Look where you are going, not where you've been.
 - Concentrate
 - Anticipate
5. Read things you enjoy.
 - Not just when you *have* to.
 - Go to the library and ask librarian for help.
 - o Find subjects that interest you - *Move toward your interests*.
 - Horses
 - Motorcycles
 - Sports
 - Cooking
 - Crafts
 - Etc.
6. Parents: make reading enjoyable for your children.
 - Read to them.
 - Read with them.
 - Find subjects they enjoy reading.

B. Reading Your Textbooks Effectively and Efficiently

- College students discover there's significantly more to read in college than high school.
- Students often say they don't have enough time to read all their assignments.
- However, many students have bad habits and prescribe to *reading myths*.

a. Common Reading Myths

1. You have to read every word.
2. One reading of the material is sufficient.
3. Don't skip passages.
4. Machines improve speed.
5. Reading at a faster rate means less comprehension.

b. How to Read Your Texts

1. **Survey** – before you read, scan the titles, headings, pictures, and chapter summaries.
2. **Question** – actively ask yourself questions as you read, such as, what are the key topics in this section/chapter?
3. **Read** – read for comprehension, locate concepts and facts, record and reduce information in the margins.
4. **Review** – practice and rehearse the main concepts, reflect on key learnings, anticipate exam questions.
5. **Recite** – transfer information to long term memory.

c. Where to Read

- Read in a place that is quiet, has good lighting, and allows you to stay alert.
- Concentration has much to do with your success as a reader.

C. Tearing Down the Myths**1. I Have To Read Every Word**

- Many of the words used in writing grammatically correct sentences actually convey no meaning.
- Necessary only to grammatical structure.
- Not necessary to the content of what is being said.
- If you exert as much effort in conceptualizing these meaningless words as you do to important ones, you limit not only your reading speed but your comprehension as well.

2. Reading Once Is Enough

- *Determine the main idea* by skimming, or surveying material, as rapidly as possible.
 - o Identify parts that need careful reading.
 - o Reread more carefully to plug the gaps in your knowledge.
- Your opinion of the material doesn't matter.
 - o Don't inject your opinion or attitude to the reading.
 - o You are trying to learn what the author is saying.
 - o Later, when you are a scholar, you can debate the merit of the subject matter.
- Many students think something's wrong with their "brain power" if they must read a textbook chapter more than once.
 - o Most of us take more exposure to a subject than one time.
- Many students automatically regress or reread doggedly with a self-punishing attitude.

- “I didn’t get anything out of that paragraph the first time, so if I punish myself by rereading it, maybe I will this time.”
- This is the hardest way to do it.
- Good reading is *selective reading*.
 - Selecting sections that are relevant to your purpose.
 - Take a few seconds to quiz yourself on the material you have just read.
 - Review those sections that are still unclear or confusing to you.
- Most effective way of spending each study hour
 - Devote as little time as possible to reading and as much time as possible to testing yourself
 - Reviewing, organizing, relating the concepts and facts
 - Mastering the technical terms, formulas, etc.
 - Thinking of applications of the concepts
- Spend your time learning ideas, not painfully processing words visually.
- Steady and consistent

3. It Is Sinful To Skip Passages In Reading

- This concept has been passed on to you generationally.
- Based upon how things used to have to be communicated and passed on.
- In the Word of God, that is absolutely true – every word is important.
- Not true in reading textbooks – it isn’t the Word of God.
 - Half of it is not even necessary for your understanding.
- Make daily decisions as to what is worth spending your time on, what can be glanced at or put aside for future perusal, and what can be relegated to the wastebasket.

4. Machines Are Necessary To Improve My Reading Speed

- Nonsense!
- Best and most effective way to increase your reading rate is to *consciously force yourself to read faster*.
- Most people, when they read, look at where they have been.
- God put our eyes in front of us so we can look where we are going, not where we’ve been.
- Don’t go backwards, it will slow you down.
- **Most effective method to increase reading speed:**
 - Use a 3 x 5 blank card.
 - Place at top of your page.
 - Keep your eyes at the center of the page.
 - Move card at a steady pace right down through the text.
 - This forces you to read forward and to look ahead, not allowing you to look where you’ve been.
 - DON’T learn to read by covering where you’re going.

5. If I Skim or Read Too Rapidly My Comprehension Will Drop

- Many people refuse to push themselves faster for fear that their comprehension will drop.
- Research shows there’s little relationship between rate and comprehension.
- Some read fast and comprehend well.

- Some read slow and comprehend poorly.
- Good comprehension depends on whether you can extract and retain the important ideas from our reading, not on how fast you read.
- If you “clutch up” when trying to read fast or skim and worry about comprehension, it will drop because your mind is occupied with your fears and you are not paying attention to the ideas you are reading.
- Concentrate on your purpose for reading -
 - o Locate main ideas and details,
 - o Force yourself to stick to the task of finding them quickly,
 - o Speed and comprehension will increase.
- Focus NOT on how fast you can get through the chapter.
- Focus ON how quickly you can locate the facts and ideas you need.

6. There Is Something About My Eyes That Keep Me From Reading Fast

- This is nonsense, assuming you have good vision or wear glasses to correct your eye problems.
 - o If you cannot focus your eyes at reading distance, you will have trouble learning to skim and scan.
 - o If you have developed the habit of focusing your eyes too narrowly and looking at word parts, it will be harder for you to learn to sweep down the page or type rapidly.
- It’s usually your BRAIN, not your EYES that slow you down in reading.
 - o Your eyes are capable of taking in more words than your brain is used to processing.
 - o If you sound out words as you read, you will probably read very slowly and have difficulty skimming and scanning until you break the habit.

D. Steps To Follow In Skimming for the Main Ideas

1. First, read the title of the chapter or selection carefully. Determine clues:
 - o Watch for key words like “causes,” “results,” “effects,”
 - o Do not overlook signal words such as those suggesting controversy
 - “versus”
 - “pros”
 - “cons”
2. Look carefully at headings and other organizational clues.
 - o If you concentrate on details and ignore the main ideas, you will have much more difficulty retaining the information you read.
3. Remember that authors of college textbooks want you to recognize the important concepts. They use:
 - o Major headings and subheadings to convey major points.
 - o Italicized words and phrases to highlight crucial terms and definitions.
 - o Lists of points set off by numbers, or paragraphs that start with phrases like, “The three most important factors...”, etc.
 - o Redundancy or repetition – stating and restating the facts and ideas.

Harvard Report

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As an experiment, Dr. Perry (psychologist), Director of the Harvard Reading-Study Center gave 1500 first year students a thirty-page chapter from a history book to read, with the explanation that in about twenty minutes they would be stopped and asked to identify the important details and to write an essay on what they had read.

The class scored well on a multiple-choice test on detail, but only **fifteen students** of 1500 were able to write a short statement on what the chapter was all about in terms of its basic theme. Only fifteen of 1500 top first-year college students had thought of reading the paragraph marked "Summary", or of skimming down the descriptive flags in the margin.

This demonstration of "**obedient purposelessness**" is evidence of "an enormous amount of wasted effort" in the study skills of first year students. Some regard it almost as cheating to look ahead or skip around. To most students, the way they study expresses "their relationship to the pressures and conventional rituals of safe passage to the next grade".

Students must be jarred out of this approach. The exercise of judgment in reading requires self-confidence, even courage, on the part of the student who must decide for himself what to read or skip. Dr. Perry suggested that students **ask themselves what it is they want to get out of a reading assignment, then look around for those points.** Instructors can help them see the major forms in which expository material is cast. Students should also "talk to themselves" while reading, asking "is this the point I'm looking for?"

Three R's for Academic Survival

- READ** Read the chapter paragraph by paragraph. Read and re-read until you can answer the question: "What did the author say in this paragraph?"
- RECORD** Once you are able to **describe** what is in the paragraph, you will want to retain that learning by **underlining, making notes in the margin, or making notes in your notebook.**
- RECITE** Cover up your notes or printed page and **recite** aloud. Remember! If you can't say it now, you won't be able to say it tomorrow in class, nor write it in a week on an exam; so while you still have a chance, try and try again, until you can say it.

Note: More time should be spent on recall than on reading.

Becoming a Flexible Reader

To become a flexible reader, you need to know how to select and use a reading style that is consistent with your purpose for reading. There are three important reading styles you should learn to use. Each has its own purpose. Knowing when and how to use these three reading styles will make you a flexible reader. Read to learn about the three reading styles used by flexible readers.

Study Reading is the reading style used by flexible readers when their purpose is to read difficult material at a high level of comprehension. When using the Study Reading style, you should read at a rate that is slower than your normal reading rate. Further, as you read you must challenge yourself to understand the material. Study Reading will often require you to read material more than once to achieve a high level of comprehension. Sometimes, reading the material aloud will also help you improve your comprehension.

Skimming is the reading style used by flexible readers when their purpose is to quickly obtain a general idea about the reading material. The Skimming style is most useful when you have to read a large amount of material in a short amount of time. When using the Skimming style, you should identify the main ideas in each paragraph and ignore the details in supportive sentences. Because you are only looking for the main idea in each paragraph you read, a lower level of comprehension is to be expected than when using the Study Reading style.

Scanning is the reading style used by flexible readers when their purpose is to quickly locate a specific piece of information within reading material. The piece of information to be located may be contained in a list of names, words, numbers, short statements, and sometimes even in a paragraph. Since you know exactly what you are looking for, move your eyes quickly over the reading material until you locate the specific piece of information you need to find.

Before you begin your next reading assignment, identify your purpose for reading. Decide if you are reading for a *high level of comprehension, trying to get a general idea about what you are reading, or looking for specific information*. Then use the reading style that is appropriate for your reading purpose.

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