Reading Strategies

Academic reading is not easy. Part of learning to use reading strategies is to try out new and different ways of reading. Even professors read, think, write, reread, puzzle over ideas. No one gets it the first time. Successful students learn how to read effectively and remember what they read. You need to learn ways to leap into reading, keep going, finish up, summarize, and connect the new information to other knowledge you have acquired.

Each time you read you are learning more and more about reading. Also, the more you read the better you get at reading. Just like playing a sport, you get better the more you practice. However there are strategies that readers use that help them become better at reading. Following are various strategies that good readers use when reading.

1. Read, Read, Read. The best thing you can do to prepare is to read as much as you can and as many different kinds of reading material that you can find. Read magazines, read newspapers, read fiction and non fiction books.

2. Think About Reading While Reading. While you are reading, ask yourself questions, “Does this make sense?” Do I understand what I am reading? If the answer is yes, keep reading. If the answer is no, STOP, go back to the beginning of the paragraph, section, or page and reread what you have already read.

Try It – Read the following passage. While you are reading, ask yourself if what you are reading makes sense. When it doesn’t make sense, go back and rereading what you already read and make sense.

The Indian Boys

The boys’ arrows were nearly gone so they sat down on the grass and stopped hunting. Over at the edge of the wood they saw Henry making a bow to a small girl who was coming down the road. She had tears in her dress and tears in her eyes. She gave Henry a note which he brought to the group of young hunters. Read to the boys, it caused great excitement. After a minute, but rapid examination of their weapons they ran down to the valley. Does were standing on the edge of the lake, making an excellent target.

Yes this is a trick passage but it helps to make the point that a reader makes assumptions while reading and when those assumptions are wrong, the reader must realize that their reading doesn’t make sense. After realizing that the reading doesn’t make sense, the reader then needs to reread the sentence or paragraph and try something that does make sense. This is the core of reading – making sense and realizing when the reading doesn’t make sense.
3. **Create Pictures as you Read (Visualization).** With many types of reading, creating pictures in your mind while reading can help you remember what you read and aid in your understanding.

Try It: Read the passage below:

Jennifer was scared at the prospect of having to make a speech in front of the entire school. “When I see everyone looking at me, I will probably freeze!” she whined to her friend Majesty. Her eyes filled with tears.

“What can I do?”

Majesty replied, “You worry about everything. You will be great! Everyone likes you and will think what you said is important. Also, do you remember the day when you introduced the speaker for the Martin Luther King Day assembly? You did a great job and most important, you did this in front of the whole school.”

“Funny Majesty. That was so different. I just had to read off a card what was written. I have to write this speech. And Mrs. Smith wants me to memorize the speech. I just can’t do it!”

As I was reading this passage, I saw a picture of two girls, sitting in an auditorium talking with each other. In the middle of the piece, my picture changed as I saw Jennifer standing up to make her point to Majesty that this speech was very different than introducing a speaker.

Your picture may also include Jennifer and Majesty may be similar to mine or different. Your picture may show Jennifer and Majesty sitting down talking, or walking and talking but basically we are all picturing the same thing – two girls talking. If you picture has two girls talking and somehow the idea of making a speech is in your picture, then you have comprehended. Understanding what the author is trying to tell you is the goal of every reading activity.

4. **Making predictions.** When you are reading academic materials, you may come to words that you can’t pronounce or understand. Skip the word and keep reading to the end of the sentence. Most of the time you can make a prediction (educated guess) as to the meaning of the word. The best readers then REREAD the sentence to make sure they have the meaning of the phrase, sentence, or paragraph.
5. Making connections. When reading, good readers make connection to their background, interest, or experience with the topic. It is important to make connections between a reader’s life and the materials read for a reader to have deeper understandings of the material read.

Try It. Read the passage below. Following the reading, choose a title for the passage. Then reread the passage with the alternate title in mind.

Rocky slowly got up from the mat, planning his escape. He hesitated a moment and tough. Things were not going well. What bothered him most was being held, especially since the charge against him had been weak. He considered his present position. The lock that held him was strong but he thought he could break it. He knew, however, that his timing would have to be perfect. Rocky was aware that it was because of his early roughness that he had been penalized so severely – much too severely from his point of view. The situation was becoming frustrating; the pressure had been grinding on him for too long. He was being ridden unmercifully. Rocky was getting angry more. He felt he was ready to make his move. He knew that his success or failure would depend on what he did in the next few seconds.

Title 1 – The Prisoner

Title 2 – The Wrestler

Different readers build different meaning depending on their background knowledge. If the reader has had experience with wrestling, then when the word ‘mat’ is read, the reader’s mind goes in that direction. On the other hand, if the reader has some knowledge of prisoners, when the word ‘escape’ is read, the reader’s mind will go in that direction. To be successful in college, students must make connections between their background and the material but must also use the previous information and chapter titles as guides.

Summary

These strategies are intended to help students when taking a test and/or reading academic material. Study and use these strategies and success will be yours.