



News & Announcements

Dates to Remember

Spring Break!

Hooray! Time to re-energize for a productive spring term.

Regional Science Fair

April 3rd-5th

University of Victoria

Come see what creative experiments Victoria students have been doing.

www.sciencefairs.bc.ca/sff.html

Science Fair foundation website

Sites with Tips and Strategies for Improving Reading Comprehension

www.coun.uvic.ca/learn/program/hndouts/psq5r.html

This page lays out steps and strategies for reading articles and books. It is geared toward university students, but the information could be applied in high school as well.

www.cerritos.edu/reading/tutorials.htm

This is an online tutorial of reading skills. Although it is a college site, it contains brief exercises that are pertinent for high school students.

Study Skills – Part Two:

Reading for Comprehension and Note-Taking

by *Dahlia Miller*

Reading for Comprehension

“Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body”

Sir Richard Steele

The key to reading for academic purposes is to take the information you find in a book or an article and to make it your own – the more you can make what you are learning your own (by writing or repeating it in your own words), the easier it’ll be for you to recall it. This means that you need to be actively engaged with what you are reading – taking the information in and adding it to what you already know.

If you want to read most efficiently, you won’t be spending all of your time just reading. There are things to be done before you read, as you read, and after you read. Now let’s turn to tips and strategies to increase your reading comprehension.

Before You Even Look at the Reading

- ▶ Gather your materials in a comfortable, uncluttered workspace. Turn off any TV’s, radios and cell phones. Let your family know that you are concentrating.
- ▶ Relax. Give yourself a pat on the back for being such a hard-working student. Remind yourself that you are capable of focussing to achieve your goals.
- ▶ Review your reading assignment, instructions, or lecture notes (this is like reading the question before starting to answer it on an exam – know what you’re looking and it will be much easier to find).

- ▶ Confirm your purpose. Consider your answer to these questions: Why are you reading this article or book? What answers are you looking for? What do you hope to learn?

Looking at the Reading for the First Time

The idea here is to create a context for what you are about to learn. Brains link new ideas to old ones. You can give your brain a head start by thinking in general terms about the topic of the reading before you begin, then it’ll be easier for you to understand and remember what you read.

- ▶ Skim the text. Notice: the title; the author’s name; the date the text was written; the table of contents if there is one; and the chapter or section headings. Notice any bold or italicized words or sentences. Consider the author’s purpose in writing the text and who the intended audience is.
- ▶ Stop. Consider what you already know about the topic. Take a guess at what you’ll learn from the reading. Making predictions in this way will actually help to increase your reading speed. If you want to be really keen, before you go any further you’ll write an outline of the reading including the section headings and fill in what you already know about each topic.

Reading

- ▶ Turn the headings in the text into questions and then look for the answers.
- ▶ Put a mark in the margin when you find an answer (or underline one

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▶ To improve quality of life, in individuals and communities through education.

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Contact Us

Director, Dahlia Miller
250-995-2632
dahlia@SmartTutorReferrals.com

mailing address:
Smart Tutor Referrals
#333 - 901 Gordon Street
Victoria, BC V8W 3Z6

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or two word answers). Try not to underline whole sentences.

- ▶ Mark or underline the answers to the Big 6 (i.e. who, what, where, when, why, and how).
- ▶ Periodically check in with yourself to see if you are thinking about what you are reading. If you are distracted, take a break, re-focus, and begin again.
- ▶ Stop reading. Look at the headings again and recite (from memory! without looking!) the answers you've just underlined or marked.
- ▶ If you've had trouble remembering the information, go back and re-read.
- ▶ Look for the main ideas in each section. Notice the supporting ideas and details (keep in mind that it's usually the main ideas that are tested, not the supporting details).
- ▶ Create mental pictures as you read.

Note-Taking

Notes from Readings

"I would advise you to read with a pen in your hand, and enter in a little book short hints of what you find...for this will be the best method of imprinting such particulars in your memory, where they will be ready, on some future occasion..."

Benjamin Franklin

I have to agree with old Ben Franklin on this one, reading and note-taking really do go hand in hand.

If you're able to write directly on your text, make notes in the margins - this is an excellent way to synthesize what you're reading. One excellent tip is to write questions in the margins opposite where you find the answers. In this way

you'll be able to review by reading your questions, answering them from memory, and then confirming the answer.

When you are taking notes on a separate piece of paper, what you want to do is to create an outline for the content of the reading. Be sure to title the outline and date it. Then start by writing the headings from the text, next, **IN YOUR OWN WORDS**, write the main idea the author is putting forward for each heading. In point form include brief notes on the supporting details and facts.

Again, as with reading for comprehension, the idea is to make the material your own. The more you think about, rewrite, reword, and consider what you've read, the better you'll be able to remember what you've read.

Notes from Lectures

Lectures tell you what your teacher thinks is most important – this information is worth noting down. As with notes from readings, when you are taking notes during a lecture, what you want to do is create an outline for what is being discussed. You've got two goals in a lecture: one is to understand what is being said, and the other is to take notes of key points **IN YOUR OWN WORDS** so that you can easily review.

- ▶ Begin with a title, the date, the class name, and the teacher's name.
- ▶ As main topics and ideas are stated, note them down. Use key words and point form to record details and examples.
- ▶ It can help to create your own set of symbols and abbreviations to draw attention to important facts, dates, etc.
- ▶ During the lecture, try to relate the new information you are hearing to what you've read or heard before. Remember that creating links in your brain makes it easier to recall information in the future.