



## ▶ Reading: What's in It for You?

What role does reading play in your life? The possibilities are countless. Are you on a sports team? Perhaps you like to read about the latest news and statistics in your sport or find out about new training techniques. Are you looking for a part-time job? You might be looking for advice about résumé writing, interview techniques, or information about a company. Are you enrolled in an English class, an algebra class, or a business class? Then your assignments require a lot of reading.

### *Improving or Fine-tuning Your Reading Skills Will:*

- ◆ Improve your grades
- ◆ Allow you to read faster and more efficiently
- ◆ Improve your study skills
- ◆ Help you remember more information accurately
- ◆ Improve your writing

## ▶ The Reading Process

Good reading skills build on one another, overlap, and spiral around in much the same way that a winding staircase goes around and around while leading you to a higher place. This handbook is designed to help you find and use the tools you will need **before**, **during**, and **after** reading.

### *Strategies You Can Use*

- ◆ Identify, understand, and learn new words
- ◆ Understand why you read
- ◆ Take a quick look at the whole text
- ◆ Try to predict what you are about to read
- ◆ Take breaks while you read and ask yourself questions about the text
- ◆ Take notes
- ◆ Keep thinking about what will come next
- ◆ Summarize

## ▶ Vocabulary Development

Word identification and vocabulary skills are the building blocks of the reading and the writing process. By learning to use a variety of strategies to build your word skills and vocabulary, you will become a stronger reader.



## Use Context to Determine Meaning

The best way to expand and extend your vocabulary is to read widely, listen carefully, and participate in a rich variety of discussions. When reading on your own, though, you can often figure out the meanings of new words by looking at their **context**, the other words and sentences that surround them.

### Tips for Using Context

**Look for clues such as:**

A synonym or an explanation of the unknown word in the sentence:

*Elise's shop specialized in millinery, or hats for women.*

A reference to what the word is or is not like:

*An archaeologist, like a historian, deals with the past.*

A general topic associated with the word:

*The cooking teacher discussed the best way to braise meat.*

A description or action associated with the word:

*He used the shovel to dig up the garden.*

## Predict a Possible Meaning

Another way to determine the meaning of a word is to take the word apart. If you understand the meaning of the **base**, or **root**, part of a word, and also know the meanings of key syllables added either to the beginning or end of the base word, you can usually figure out what the word means.

**Word Origins** Since Latin, Greek, and Anglo-Saxon roots are the basis for much of our English vocabulary, having some background in languages can be a useful vocabulary tool. For example, *astronomy* comes from the Greek root *astro*, which means "relating to the stars." *Stellar* also has a meaning referring to stars, but its origin is Latin. Knowing root words in other languages can help you determine meanings, derivations, and spellings in English.

**Prefixes and Suffixes** A prefix is a word part that can be added to the beginning of a word. For example, the prefix *semi* means "half" or "partial," so *semicircle* means "half a circle." A suffix is a word part that can be added to the end of a word. Adding a suffix often changes a word from one part of speech to another.

### Recognize Word Meanings Across Subjects

Have you learned a new word in one class and then noticed it in your reading for other subjects? The word might not mean exactly the same thing in each class, but you can use the meaning you already know to help you understand the word's meaning in another subject area.



**Dictionary Entry**

**Forms of the word**      **Numbered definitions**      **Usage label**

**Part of speech**      **Example of use**

**Idioms**      **Origin (etymology)**      **Synonyms**

**help** (help) **helped** or (archaic) **holp**, **helped** or (archaic) **hol-pen**, **help-ing**. *V.t.* **1.** to provide with support, as in the performance of a task, be of service to: *He helped his brother paint the room.* ▲ also used elliptically with a preposition or adverb: *He helped the old woman up the stairs.* **2.** to enable (someone or something) to accomplish a goal or achieve a desired effect: *The coach's advice helped the team to win.* **3.** to provide with sustenance or relief, as in time of need or distress; succor: *The Red Cross helped the flood victims.* **4.** to promote or contribute to; further: *The medication helped his recovery.* **5.** to be useful or profitable to; be of advantage to: *It might help you if you read the book.* **6.** to improve or remedy: *Nothing really helped his sinus condition.* **7.** to prevent; stop: *I can't help his rudeness.* **8.** to refrain from; avoid: *I couldn't help smiling when I heard the story.* **9.** to wait on or serve (often with to): *The clerk helped us. The hostess helped him to the dessert.* **10. cannot help but.** *Informal* cannot but. **11. so help me (God).** oath of affirmation. **12. to help oneself to.** to take or appropriate: *The thief helped himself to all the jewels.* —*v.i.* to provide support, as in the performance of a task; be of service. *n.* **1.** act of providing support, service, or sustenance. **2.** source of support, service, or sustenance. **3.** person or group of persons hired to work for another or others. **4.** means of improving, remedying, or preventing. [Old English *helpan* to aid, succor, benefit.] **Syn.** *v.t.* **1. Help, aid, assist** mean to support in a useful way. Help is the most common word and means to give support in response to a known or expressed need or for a definite purpose: *Everyone helped to make the school fair a success.* **Aid** means to give relief in times of distress or difficulty: *It is the duty of rich nations to aid the poor.* **Assist** means to serve another person in the performance of his task in a secondary capacity: *The secretary assists the officer by taking care of his correspondence.*

**Using Dictionaries** A dictionary provides the meaning or meanings of a word. Look at the sample dictionary entry above to see what other information it provides.

**Thesauruses and Specialized Reference Books** A thesaurus provides synonyms and often antonyms. Specialized dictionaries, such as *Barron's Dictionary of Business Terms* or *Black's Law Dictionary*, list terms and expressions that are not commonly included in a general dictionary. You can also use online dictionaries.

**Glossaries** Many textbooks and technical works contain condensed dictionaries that provide an alphabetical listing of words used in the text and their specific definitions.



## ► Understanding What You Read

Reading comprehension means understanding—deriving meaning from—what you have read. Using a variety of strategies can help you improve your comprehension and make reading more interesting and more fun.

### Read for a Reason

To get the greatest benefit from what you read, you should **establish a purpose for reading**. In school, you have many reasons for reading. Some of them are:

- To learn and understand new information
- To find specific information
- To review before a test
- To complete an assignment
- To prepare (research) before you write

As your reading skills improve, you will notice that you apply different strategies to fit the different purposes for reading. For example, if you are reading for entertainment, you might read quickly, but if you read to gather information or follow directions, you might read more slowly, take notes, construct a graphic organizer, or reread sections of text.

### Draw on Personal Background

Drawing on personal background may also be called activating prior knowledge. Before you start reading a text, ask yourself questions like these:

- What have I heard or read about this topic?
- Do I have any personal experience relating to this topic?

**Using a KWL Chart** A KWL chart is a good device for organizing information you gather before, during, and after reading. In the first column, list what you already **know**, then list what you **want** to know in the middle column. Use the third column when you review and you assess what you **learned**. You can also add more columns to record places where you found information and places where you can look for more information.

K (What I already know)	W (What I want to know)	L (What I have learned)

**Adjust Your Reading Speed** Your reading speed is a key factor in how well you understand what you are reading. You will need to adjust your speed depending on your reading purpose.

**Scanning** means running your eyes quickly over the material to look for words or phrases. Scan when you need a specific piece of information.

**Skimming** means reading a passage quickly to find its main idea or to get an overview. Skim a text when you preview to determine what the material is about.



**Reading for detail** involves careful reading while paying attention to text structure and monitoring your understanding. Read for detail when you are learning concepts, following complicated directions, or preparing to analyze a text.

## ► Techniques to Understand and Remember What You Read

### Preview

Before beginning a selection, it is helpful to **preview** what you are about to read.

#### Previewing Strategies

- ◆ Read the title, headings, and subheadings of the selection.
- ◆ Look at the illustrations and notice how the text is organized.
- ◆ Skim the selection: Take a glance at the whole thing.
- ◆ Decide what the main idea might be.
- ◆ Predict what the selection will be about.

### Predict

Have you ever read a mystery, decided who committed the crime, and then changed your mind as more clues were revealed? You were adjusting your predictions. Did you smile when you found out you guessed the murderer? You were verifying your predictions.

As you read, take educated guesses about story events and outcomes; that is, **make predictions** before and during reading. This will help you focus your attention on the text and it will improve your understanding.

### Determine the Main Idea

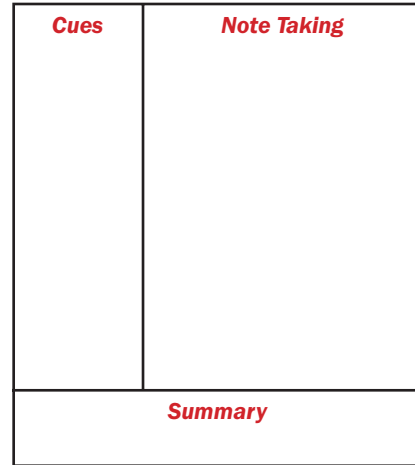
When you look for the **main idea**, you are looking for the most important statement in a text. Depending on what kind of text you are reading, the main idea can be located at the very beginning (as in news stories in a newspaper or a magazine) or at the end (as in a scientific research document). Ask yourself:

- What is each sentence about?
- Is there one sentence that is more important than all the others?
- What idea do details support or point out?



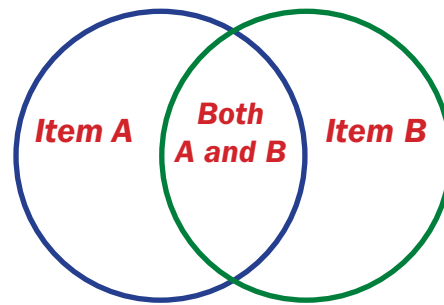
## Taking Notes

**Cornell Note-Taking System** There are many methods for note taking. The **Cornell Note-Taking System** is a well-known method that can help you organize what you read. To the right is a diagram that shows how the Cornell Note-Taking System organizes information.

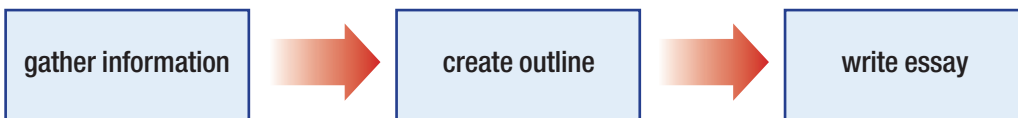


**Graphic Organizers** Using a graphic organizer to retell content in a visual representation will help you remember and retain content. You might make a **chart** or **diagram**, organizing what you have read. Here are some examples of graphic organizers:

**Venn diagrams** When mapping out a compare-and-contrast text structure, you can use a Venn diagram. The outer portions of the circles will show how two characters, ideas, or items contrast, or are different, and the overlapping part will compare two things, or show how they are similar.



**Flow charts** To help you track the sequence of events, or cause and effect, use a flow chart. Arrange ideas or events in their logical, sequential order. Then draw arrows between your ideas to indicate how one idea or event flows into another.



## Visualize

Try to form a mental picture of scenes, characters, and events as you read. Use the details and descriptions the author gives you. If you can **visualize** what you read, it will be more interesting and you will remember it better.

## Question

Ask yourself questions about the text as you read. Ask yourself about the importance of the sentences, how they relate to one another, if you understand what you just read, and what you think is going to come next.



## Clarify

If you feel you do not understand meaning (through questioning), try these techniques:

### *What to Do When You Do Not Understand*

- ◆ Reread confusing parts of the text.
- ◆ Diagram (chart) relationships between chunks of text, ideas, and sentences.
- ◆ Look up unfamiliar words.
- ◆ Talk out the text to yourself.
- ◆ Read the passage once more.

## Review

Take time to stop and review what you have read. Use your note-taking tools (graphic organizers or Cornell notes charts). Also, review and consider your KWL chart.

## Monitor Your Comprehension

Continue to check your understanding by using the following two strategies:

**Summarize** Pause and tell yourself the main ideas of the text and the key supporting details. Try to answer the following questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

**Paraphrase** Pause, close the book, and try to retell what you have just read in your own words. It might help to pretend you are explaining the text to someone who has not read it and does not know the material.

## ► Understanding Text Structure

Good writers do not just put together sentences and paragraphs. They organize their writing with a specific purpose in mind. That organization is called text structure. When you understand and follow the structure of a text, it is easier to remember the information you are reading. There are many ways text may be structured. Watch for **signal words**. They will help you follow the text's organization. Also, remember to use these techniques when you write.

## Compare and Contrast

The compare and contrast structure shows similarities and differences between people, things, and ideas. This is often used to demonstrate that things that seem alike are really different, or vice versa.

**Signal words:** similarly, more, less, on the one hand/on the other hand, in contrast, but, however



## Cause and Effect

Writers use the cause and effect structure to explore the reasons for something happening and to examine the results, or consequences, of events.

**Signal words:** so, because, as a result, therefore, for the following reasons

## Problem and Solution

When they organize text around the question “how?”, writers state a problem and suggest solutions.

**Signal words:** how, help, problem, obstruction, overcome, difficulty, need, attempt, have to, must

## Sequence

Sequencing tells you the order in which to consider thoughts or facts. Examples of sequencing are:

**Chronological order** refers to the order in which events take place.

**Signal words:** first, next, then, finally

**Spatial order** describes the organization of things in space (to describe a room, for example).

**Signal words:** above, below, behind, next to

**Order of importance** lists things or thoughts from the most important to the least important (or the other way around).

**Signal words:** principal, central, main, important, fundamental

## ▶ Reading for Meaning

It is important to think about what you are reading to get the most information out of a text, to understand the consequences of what the text says, to remember the content, and to form your own opinion about what the content means.

### Interpret

Interpreting is asking yourself, “What is the writer really saying?” and then using what you already know to answer that question.

### Infer

Writers do not always directly state everything they want you to understand. By providing clues and details, they sometimes imply certain information. An **inference** involves using your reason and experience to develop the idea on your own, based on what an author implies or suggests. When drawing inferences, be sure that you have accurately based your guesses on supporting details from the text. If you cannot point to a place in the selection to help back up your inference, you may need to rethink your guess.



## Draw Conclusions

A conclusion is a general statement you can make and explain with reasoning, or with supporting details from a text. If you read a story describing a sport in which five players bounce a ball and throw it through a high hoop, you may conclude that the sport is basketball.

## Analyze

To understand persuasive nonfiction (a text that discusses facts and opinions to arrive at a conclusion), you need to analyze statements and examples to see if they support the main idea. To understand an informational text (such as a textbook, which gives you information, not opinions), you need to keep track of how the ideas are organized to find the main points.

**Hint:** Use your graphic organizers and notes charts.

## Distinguish Facts and Opinions

Learning to determine the difference between facts and opinions is one of the most important reading skills you can learn. A fact is a statement that can be proven. An opinion is what the writer believes. A writer may support opinions with facts, but an opinion cannot be proven. For example:

**Fact:** California produces fruit and other agricultural products.

**Opinion:** California produces the best fruit and other agricultural products.

## Evaluate

Would you seriously consider an article on nuclear fission if you knew it was written by a comedic actor? If you need to rely on accurate information, you need to find out who wrote what you are reading and why. Where did the writer get information? Is the information one-sided? Can you verify the information?

## ▶ Reading for Research

You will need to **read actively** in order to research a topic. You might also need to generate an interesting, relevant, and researchable **question** on your own and locate appropriate print and nonprint information from a wide variety of sources. Then you will need to **categorize** that information, evaluate it, and **organize** it in a new way in order to produce a research project for a specific audience. Finally, **draw conclusions** about your original research question. These conclusions may lead you to other areas for further inquiry.



## Locate Appropriate Print and Nonprint Information

In your research, try to use a variety of sources. Because different sources present information in different ways, your research project will be more interesting and balanced when you read a variety of sources.

**Literature and Textbooks** These texts include any book used as a basis for instruction or a source of information.

**Book Indexes** A book index, or a bibliography, is an alphabetical listing of books. Some book indexes list books on specific subjects. Others are more general. Some list a variety of topics or resources.

**Periodicals** Magazines and journals are issued at regular intervals, such as weekly or monthly. One way to locate information in magazines is to use the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*. This guide is available in print form in most libraries.

**Technical Manuals** A manual is a guide, or handbook, intended to give instruction on how to perform a task or operation. A vehicle owner's manual might give information on how to operate and service a car.

**Reference Books** Reference books include encyclopedias and almanacs, and are used to locate specific pieces of information.

**Electronic Encyclopedias, Databases, and the Internet** There are many ways to locate extensive information using your computer. Infotrac, for instance, acts as an online readers guide. CD-ROM encyclopedias can provide easy access to all subjects.

## Organize and Convert Information

As you gather information from different sources, taking careful notes, you will need to think about how to **synthesize** the information, or convert it into a unified whole, as well as how to change it into a form your audience will easily understand and that will meet your assignment guidelines.

1. First, ask yourself what you want your audience to know.
2. Then, think about a pattern of organization, a structure that will best show your main ideas. You might ask yourself the following questions:
  - When comparing items or ideas, what graphic aids can I use?
  - When showing the reasons something happened and the effects of certain actions, what text structure would be best?
  - How can I briefly and clearly show important information to my audience?
  - Would an illustration or even a cartoon help to make a certain point?