



Active Reading Strategies

Purpose

Active reading allows students to engage with the text and assist in comprehension and meaning-making.

Active Reading: Multiple Readings

Several readings of a text: Help students see the value of multiple readings of a text (first for a general sense, another for clearer comprehension of main ideas and supporting details, and another for analysis and response.)

Active Reading: Annotation

Annotation as a skill associated with close-reading, is a strategy for actively engaging with a text, while reading, through the comments, questions and reactions you have to the text as well as finding important information quickly when reviewing the text. Annotating a text will allow for the reader to identify the location of important ideas and information; express the main idea of the text; trace the development of ideas throughout the text; and keep a record of the reader's reactions to the text at the time of the reading.

- Highlight sentences that express and/or summarize the main idea.
- Rewrite the main idea(s) in the margins of the text.
- Underline supporting details.
- Create a marginal list of details under or near the main idea.
- Circle unknown or unfamiliar words, then write a clear and correct definition near it. Finally paraphrase the definition in simple, clear terms.
- Place question marks in the margins or near passages that are unclear or confusing.
- Respond in margins to questions or provocative statements posed by the text.
- Star or asterisk passages that seem important or meaningful.
- Write questions to ask the author about the text; notes about interesting passages; and personal reflections and conclusions that occur during the reading.
- Stop and think, question, connect, and predict while reading: If reading a text in class, this can be structured by breaking the reading into sections and have questions to guide the thought process.

Active Reading: Comprehension Enhancement

Comprehension enhancement. The best way to know if students comprehend material is to encourage them to monitor their recall as they read. To enhance comprehension, encourage students to:

- Learn an *active reading method* to ensure they are staying engaged in the reading process. The SQ3R method is one strategy for active reading.
- Recite details and main ideas after each section. The more the students can recall the better their comprehension. If they find that they cannot recall much information, suggest that they break their reading up into smaller sections using the subheadings or subtopics and again recite. Then they should increase the section size as they see improvement in their recall ability.
- Avoid slowing down their reading speed to try to compensate for lack of comprehension. Research reveals that reading at a slower speed often interferes with comprehension because it forces the reader to resort to word-for-word reading. Instead, they should use an index card or ruler as a guide to remain focused and keep their eyes moving.

Active Reading: Critical Thinking

Focus on critical thinking by encouraging students to:

- Identify purpose, tone, audience, and voice.
- Discuss genre and rhetorical approaches.
- Look at elements of style.



Active Reading Strategies

- Recognize the underlying assumptions of the author and the source.
- Acknowledge their own assumptions as they read the text.
- Decipher patterns of organization.
- Distinguish fact from opinion.
- Make inferences and draw conclusions.
- Examine the logic of arguments and find any faulty thinking.
- Determine that which was excluded from the text.

Active Reading: Texts and Connections

Encourage students to make connections:

- Between ideas in the text;
- Between ideas in the text with ideas in other texts; and
- Between the text and the world, between the text and self.

Focus on one of three types of connections at a time, building with each text read. Make sure to explain the three types of connections and demonstrate how to apply them to an assigned text, how to compare to a previous text, and how it use in one's own writing.

To effectively use the strategies above, instructors should demonstrate for students how to make meaningful connections. For some students, the easiest connection to demonstrate is text-to-self. Instructors should model text-to-self connections initially with selections that are relatively close to the student's personal experiences. Next instructors should model how to make text-to-text connections. Encourage students to consider the variety of texts they have experienced which will help them understand the new selection. Finally instructors should model how to make text-to-world connections. Building the necessary background knowledge is a crucial means for providing text-to-world support. It is important to recognize that students may make tangential connections that can distract them from the text. Thus, throughout instruction, students should be challenged to analyze how their connections are contributing to their understanding of the text. Text connections should enhance text comprehension.

Below are some examples of connecting statements for students to use as a reference to prompt classroom discussion and/or journal activities.

- This part reminds me of. . .
- I felt like. . . (character) when I. . .
- If that happened to me I would . . .
- This book reminds me of. . . (another text) because . . .
- I can relate to . . . (part of text) because one time. . .
- Something similar happened to me when. . .

Below are some examples to use as prompts for classroom discussion and/or journal activities.

Text-to-self

- What does this remind me of in my life?
- What is this similar to in my life?
- How is this different from my life?
- Has something like this ever happened to me?
- How does this relate to my life?
- What were my feelings when I read this?



COLLEGE OF IDAHO

Active Reading Strategies

Text-to-text

- What does this remind me of in another text I've read?
- How is this text similar to other things I've read? How is this different?
- Have I read about something like this before?
- How does this connect to other texts assigned in this course or in other courses I've taken?

Text-to-world

- What does this remind me of in the real world?
- How is this text similar to things that happened in the real world?
- How is this different from things that happen in the real world?
- What passages relate to the world around me?
- What did this text show me about the world that I didn't know before?
- How does this text make me think differently about the world in some way?