

Lesson 2

Reading for Meaning



Key Words

analogy
antonym
appositive
comprehension
concept
context
hypothesis
inventory
mood
prediction
properties
purpose
strategy
synonym

What You Will Learn to Do

- Select reading comprehension strategies to enhance learning

Linked Core Abilities

- Communicate using verbal, nonverbal, visual, and written techniques
- Apply critical thinking techniques

Skills and Knowledge You Will Gain Along the Way

- Identify the purposes of reading
- Distinguish among reading comprehension strategies
- Distinguish among the types of context clues readers use to determine word meaning

- Recognize how to apply vocabulary strategies to enhance vocabulary context
- Relate vocabulary in context strategies to reading comprehension
- Define the key words contained in this lesson

Introduction

Every day you are bombarded with things to read—junk mail, billboards, newspapers, magazines, and books. Sometimes it is hard to decide what to read and what to throw away. You read for many reasons: to gain information, for entertainment, to pass the time, or to study. If you want to improve your reading skills, read as much as you possibly can. You should read everything interesting; even the backs of cereal boxes and comic books will increase your reading speed and comprehension. Soon, reading will come easily and it will be more enjoyable. But do not give up looking for the types of material that you find interesting. All it takes is one good book and you will be enjoying the written word for all it is worth.

Reading is a communication skill that many people find difficult; however, similar to the other communication skills, practice will make reading easier and more enjoyable. This lesson covers a few guidelines you can follow that may make reading simple and more pleasurable.

Previewing

Preview (or scan) the material, especially a book, before you begin to read it. Previewing consists of looking over the table of contents, index, and title page. Search for familiar concepts and ideas that the material discusses. Do not spend too much time previewing but do allow enough time to become familiar with the contents.



Courtesy of Alan Marsh/First Light.

Questioning

After you preview the material, make a list of questions related to the topic about which you are reading. Your preview should help you come up with relevant questions. Make your questions detailed. Remember that you can increase your knowledge by asking questions. Also, your reading will be more directed because you will be looking for specific answers.

The following are three different kinds of questions you can ask to gain better understanding of what you are reading.

- **Empirical Questions.** These questions ask for information contained in the material that you are reading. They are questions to which the answers are factual. An example of an empirical question is “When did this event take place?”
- **Value Questions.** These questions reflect values or point of view. Answers to value questions are based on opinion. An example of a value question is “Do I agree with the principles expressed in this book?”
- **Analytical Questions.** These questions ask for a definition of what we mean by the words used in the question. Often they need to be asked before the other two types of questions are asked. For example, if you were asked, “How much of the material in this lesson did you comprehend?” you would first have to ask the question, “How do you measure comprehension?”

You will use all three types of these questions during your studies.

Reading and Note Taking

After you have previewed your material and developed questions about the material, you are ready to read. Clear your mind of all personal challenges, open up the book, and begin the first page slowly. Keep a dictionary nearby so you can look up unfamiliar words as you go along. As you read, take notes in the column of the book (if it is your own book) or on a separate sheet of paper. You will be making an **inventory** of the information in the topic.

Schedule breaks during your reading. Do not try to read for a long period of time or you may become bored or sleepy. Also, do not read little sections at a time or you may easily become confused and distracted. Allow yourself at least half-hour intervals of reading time and then reward yourself with a five-minute break. During your break, walk around, stretch, or get a glass of water or a piece of fruit but have the self-discipline to return to your reading after the five-minute period is over.

As you progress in school, your instructors will require you to do research, give speeches, and prepare reports on material that may or may not be familiar to you. To complete these assignments, you may have to read as much material on your given subject as you can. Because you are reading for a **purpose** other than enjoyment, it may be helpful to first scan the material, then read it and take notes.

Key Note Terms

inventory – an itemized list of current assets; a catalog of the property of an individual or estate; a list of goods on hand; a survey of natural resources; a list of traits, preferences, attitudes, interests or other abilities used to evaluate personal characteristics or skills

purpose – something set up as an object or end to be obtained



Courtesy of Ken Karp.

Taking notes on your reading gives you the opportunity to pick out the facts that are important to you. You will also remember what you are reading because you have to translate the material into your own words. Reading combined with note taking is an excellent way to remember important facts and to become familiar with new and challenging material.

Outlining

Outlining is an important part of reading. After you have read through the material once, create an outline. Your outline should capture the main points or ideas and answer the questions that you came up with earlier. If you have a large reading assignment, you may find it easier to outline sections of the material rather than trying to outline the entire assignment at once. You will find outlining a helpful tool for you when it is time to review the material you have read for a test.

Hints for Difficult Reading

Sometimes you must read about difficult subjects. For difficult reading materials, use the following suggestions to assist you in understanding the material better.

- **Look for key words in your material.**
- **Hold a mini-review at the end of each paragraph. When reading a paragraph, you will see that it contains a main idea or topic. Notice that the other sentences support the main idea. If you determine what the main idea is first, you will better understand the concept of the paragraph.**
- **Listen as you read the material aloud.**
- **Ask an instructor questions about the material.**
- **Find a tutor who can help you to understand the material better.**
- **Explain what you have read to another person.**



Courtesy of Ken Karp.

- Take notes while you read the material; make an outline when you finish reading.
- After reading your material, take a break from it. Work on or think about other projects.
- Find another book, reference materials, and/or textbooks that cover the same topic. Sometimes other books can describe the same topic and concepts more clearly.
- Imagine that what you are reading is real. Look at the pictures in the book and develop mental pictures in your mind about the material. Try to imagine that you are a part of them.
- Keep a dictionary nearby so you can look up unfamiliar words as you read.

Reading Comprehension Strategies

The following reading comprehension strategies will assist you in gaining a better understanding of what you read.

Key Note Terms

strategy – the art of carefully devising or employing a plan of action or method designed to achieve a goal; the art or science of planning and directing large-scale military operations and campaigns

prediction – something that is foretold on the basis of observation, experience, or scientific reason

Directed Reading-Thinking Activity (DR-TA)

The DR-TA reading comprehensive **strategy** is used to predict or define the author's purposes for writing the material you are reading. When you read, select relevant data, evaluate it, and use it to form **predictions** of the content of the material based on the information that you acquire. In this lesson, you can predict that the author wants to help you improve your reading comprehension.

GIST

Have you heard the expression, “Did you get the gist of the movie?” *Gist* means the main point of the movie. In the GIST reading comprehensive strategy, the letters actually stand for *Generating Interactions between Schemata and Text*. The strategy asks you to focus on short passages in your reading, three to five paragraphs in length, and create summaries for each passage in a structured step-by-step process. This will help you comprehend, or get the gist of, the passage.

Think-Alouds

Think-alouds help you monitor your comprehension and apply self-correction strategies to get the most out of your reading. Five strategies that can be used during think-alouds are as follows:

- **Develop a hypothesis by making predictions.** For example, by reading the introduction in this lesson, you can make a prediction that this lesson is about learning how to become a better reader.
- **Develop images by describing the pictures forming in your mind from the information that you are reading.** For example, when you continue with the lesson, you might picture yourself reading a schoolbook.
- **Link new information with your prior knowledge by sharing analogies.** For example, while reading this lesson, you remember how you became a better football player when you approached each game with a plan. You now apply that **analogy** to becoming a better reader by following the plan in this lesson.
- **Monitor comprehension by verbalizing a confusing point.** For example, sometimes it can help your comprehension by talking through a point in the reading that might be confusing.
- **Regulate comprehension by demonstrating strategies.** For example, if your predictions about the meaning of this lesson turns out not to be what you originally thought, you can talk it through until you can comprehend the correct meaning of the lesson.

Question-Answer Relationships (QARs)

As stated earlier in this lesson, one of the guidelines to help you become a better reader involves asking questions about the material that you have read. The type of question you ask must be based on the information you need to answer the question. In this reading comprehension strategy, you must draw on two different information sources to answer your questions: the information in the material that you read and the information inside your head. For example, you can find the answer to the question “What are some hints to help you understand difficult reading?” in the lesson material. However, if your question was “Does one hint work better for you than another?” you would have to rely on your knowledge of what works best for you.

Vocabulary Comprehension

Reading forms the basis of your study skills. An active learner pursues information on his or her own through reading. Class reading assignments provide a chance for you to practice all the skills you have learned from this chapter. This lesson covers vocabulary comprehension.

Studying vocabulary increases word recognition. As you read, you recognize the meaning of words and interpret the information in the text. The more you read, the more new words you acquire and understand. This builds your vocabulary, makes reading become easier and faster, and raises your reading comprehension.

Key Note Terms

hypothesis – an assumption or concession made for the sake of argument; an interpretation of a practical situation or condition taken as the ground for action

analogy – resemblance in some particulars between things otherwise unlike

Six Strategies to Improve Vocabulary Comprehension

The following sections show you strategies to help improve vocabulary comprehension: context clues, word structure, and word mapping. Each clue will help you build your vocabulary and get more out of what you read.

Context Clues

Learning the meaning of words from the **context** of your reading material can be the most useful strategy to increase your vocabulary comprehension. Using the context that surrounds an unknown word helps to reveal its meaning.

There are several different types of context clues that you can use to find the meaning of a word within the context of what you are reading.

- **Definition.** The author equates the unknown word to a word that is known or more familiar to you. For example, “Physiology is a branch of biology that deals with the functions and activities of life or of living matter (as organs, tissues, or cells).”
- **Synonyms.** The author pairs the unknown word with a **synonym** or other closely related words. For example, “The President’s wife possessed the traits of a promising leader: wisdom, judgment, and sagacity.”
- **Comparison Clues.** Often an unfamiliar word is used in comparison with a familiar word. Your knowledge of the familiar word may help you figure out the meaning of the new one. For example, “The thatch in the roof was as likely to burn as any other straw.”

Another example of a comparison clue is the use of an **appositive**. An appositive uses two adjacent nouns that refer to the same thing. For example, using the words poet and Burns adjacent to each other in the phrase “a biography of the poet Burns” helps define both words.

- **Contrast Clue.** In a comparison clue, you learn that a new word is like a known word. In a contrast clue, you learn that a new word is different from the known word. For example, “At night the street was pacific, unlike the crowded, noisy chaos it was during the day.”
- **Examples in Context.** You can predict the meaning of an unfamiliar word when it is used with an example of a familiar word. For example, “At the show we saw magicians, ventriloquists, and other performers.”
- **Inferring Meaning from Context.** The author sets a **mood** (ironic, serious, funny, etc.) in which the meaning of the unknown word can be hypothesized. For example, “The tormented lion roared in pain as he tried to escape from his captors.”

Word Structure

Sometimes a word can give clues to the meaning in its structure. Analyzing the word’s structure and **properties** is a vocabulary strategy that you can use to figure out the word’s meaning. When you approach an unknown word, you can guess at its meaning by breaking down the parts of the word.

Key Note Terms

context – written or spoken knowledge that can help to illuminate meaning of a word or passage

synonym – one of two or more words or expressions of the same language that have the same or nearly same meaning in some or all senses

appositive – a grammatical construction in which two usually adjacent nouns having the same referent stand in the same syntactical relation to the rest of a sentence: as the poet and Burns in “a biography of the poet Burns”

Key Note Terms

mood – a conscious state of mind or predominant emotion

properties – a quality or trait belonging and especially peculiar to an individual or thing

Longer words can be some of the most difficult to figure out, but they can be put into categories that will help you.

- **Compound words are two known words joined together. Examples include match-maker and bookkeeper.**
- **Words that contain a familiar stem to which an affix (prefix or suffix) has been added. Examples include *microscope* and *tasteless*.**
- **Words that can be broken down into regular pronounceable parts. Examples include *subterfuge* and *strangulate*.**
- **Words that contain irregular pronounceable parts so that there is no clear pronunciation. Examples include *louver* and *indictment*.**

Word Mapping

A vocabulary word map is a graphic organizer that helps you think about new words or **concepts** in several ways.

To build a word map, start by entering the new word in the middle of the map; then fill in the rest of the map with a definition, synonyms, **antonyms**, and a picture to help illustrate the new word. This is shown in Figure 3.2.1.

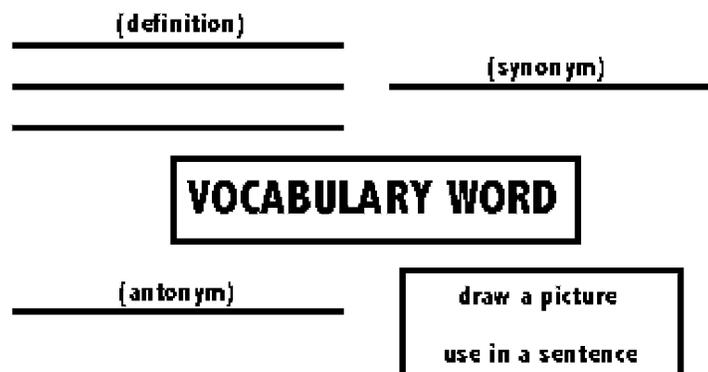
Visual Imaging

When you use visual imaging, you think of a word that either looks like or sounds like the word whose meaning you are trying to learn. Thinking of the picture of the look-alike word and/or image will help you remember the word and its meaning.

For example, the word *potable* means suitable for drinking. You can break the word down to a familiar word, *pot*. You can then associate the word *pot* with something you can put in it, such as water. When you see the new word *potable* you will picture a pot with water for drinking and remember that the word *potable* means something suitable for drinking.

Look for Root Words

Searching for the root of a word can sometimes help you understand the meaning of the word. For example, related words are built on the same root and differ in their use of prefixes and suffixes. Each time a different prefix or suffix is added to



Key Note Terms

concept – an abstract or generic idea generalized from particular instance

antonym – a word of opposite meaning (the usual antonym of good is bad)

Figure 3.2.1: Building a word map.

Courtesy of CACI and the U.S. Army.

the root you have a different word with a different meaning. For example, the words *act*, *activate*, *action*, *activity*, *active*, *acting*, and *react* all contain the root word *act*. Although the parts of the speech change, the meaning of the word *act* in each word helps you understand the meaning of each word. Some root words do not change their spelling when suffixes are added, for example, detect and detective; other root words do change their spelling, for example, decide and decision.

Use the Dictionary

A dictionary is a wonderful tool for learning. It can help you spell, define, and explore the history of words. If you cannot comprehend a word by following the other strategies, it is time to turn to the dictionary. Spend some time learning how a dictionary is organized. Dictionaries arrange words alphabetically and include the following features:

- **Guide Words** are boldfaced words in the top corners of the page that indicate the first and last words listed on that page.
- **Main Entries** are boldfaced words listed at the left side of each column of words.
- **Definitions:** the meanings for each main entry. If there are many meanings, they are numbered separately.
- **Example Sentences** show a particular meaning of the word.
- **Parts of Speech** show if a word is a noun, a verb, an adjective, and so on with examples showing how the word is used in each instance, especially if it can function as more than one part of speech.
- **Syllable Structure** shows the word written with breaks between syllables.
- **Pronunciation:** An indication of the way the word sounds.

Some suggestions that may help you include the following:

- **Read.** The more you read, the more words with which you will come in contact.
- **Use newfound vocabulary** in your everyday communication (writing, speaking).
- **Become familiar with the glossary** of your textbooks.
- **Become familiar with the dictionary.** Understand the pronunciation keys as well as why there are multiple meanings for words.
- **Try to learn five new words a day.** Use them when communicating. This practice will help you retain the words in your long-term memory.

What Are Some Challenges of Reading?

Everyone has reading challenges, such as difficult texts, distractions, a lack of speed and **comprehension**, or insufficient vocabulary. Following are some ideas about how to meet these challenges. Note that if you have a reading disability, if English is not your primary language, or if you have limited reading skills, you may need additional support. Most colleges provide services for students through a reading center or tutoring program. Take the initiative to seek help if you need it. Many accomplished learners have benefited from help in specific areas.

Key Note Term

comprehension – the act or action of grasping with the intellect

Working Through Difficult Texts

Although many textbooks are useful learning tools, some may be poorly written and organized, perhaps written by experts who may not explain information in the friendliest manner for nonexperts. Because texts are often written to challenge the intellect, even well-written texts may be difficult to read.

Generally, the further you advance in your education, the more complex your required reading is likely to be. You may feel at times as though you are reading a foreign language as you encounter new concepts, words, and terms. Assignments can also be difficult when the required reading is from *primary sources*—original documents rather than another writer’s interpretation of these documents—or from academic journal articles and scientific studies that don’t define basic terms or supply a wealth of examples. Primary sources include the following:

Reprinted from *Keys to Success: How to Achieve Your Goals*, Third Edition by Carol Carter, Joyce Bishop, and Sarah Lyman Kravits (2001), Prentice Hall, Inc.

- **Historical documents**
- **Works of literature (novels, poems, and plays)**
- **Scientific studies, including lab reports and accounts of experiments**
- **Journal articles**

The following strategies may help you make your way through difficult reading material:

- **Approach your reading assignments head-on.** Be careful not to prejudge them as impossible or boring before you even start to read.
- **Accept the fact that some texts may require some extra work and concentration.** Set a goal to make your way through the material and learn, whatever it takes.
- **When a primary source does not explain concepts, define them on your own.** Ask your instructor or other students for help. Consult reference materials in that subject area, other class materials, dictionaries, and encyclopedias. You may want to create your own mini-library at home. Collect reference materials that you use often, such as a dictionary, a thesaurus, a writer’s style handbook, and maybe an atlas or computer manual (many of these are available as computer software or CD-ROMs). “If you find yourself going to the library to look up the same reference again and again, consider purchasing that book for your personal or office library,” advises library expert Sherwood Harris.
- **Look for order and meaning in seemingly chaotic reading materials.** The information you will find in this chapter on the SQ3R reading technique and on critical reading will help you discover patterns and achieve a greater depth of understanding. Finding order within chaos is an important skill, not just in the mastery of reading but also in life. This skill can give you power by helping you read (think through) work dilemmas, personal problems, and educational situations.

Managing Distractions

With so much happening around you, it's often hard to focus on your reading. Some distractions are external: the telephone or a child who needs attention. Other distractions come from within, as thoughts arise about various topics, for example, a paper due in art history or a Web site that you want to visit.

Identify the Distraction and Choose a Suitable Action

Pinpoint what's distracting you before you decide what to do. If the distraction is *external* and *out of your control*, such as outside construction or a noisy group in the library, try to move away from it. If the distraction is *external* but *within your control*, such as the television or telephone, take action; for example, turn off the television or let the answering machine answer the phone.

If the distraction is *internal*, different strategies may help you clear your mind. You may want to take a study break and tend to one of the issues that worries you. Physical exercise may relax and refocus you. For some people, studying while listening to music helps to quiet a busy mind. For others, silence may do the trick. If you need silence to read or study and cannot find a truly quiet environment, consider purchasing sound-muffling headphones or even earplugs.

We all have distractions. Talk with or write one of your close friends about the proactive way in which you are dealing with your distractions. Solicit your friend's perspective on how he or she handles similar issues.

Find a Study Place and Time That Promote Success

Any reader needs focus and discipline in order to concentrate on the material. Finding a place and time to study that minimizes outside distractions will help you achieve that focus. Here are some suggestions:

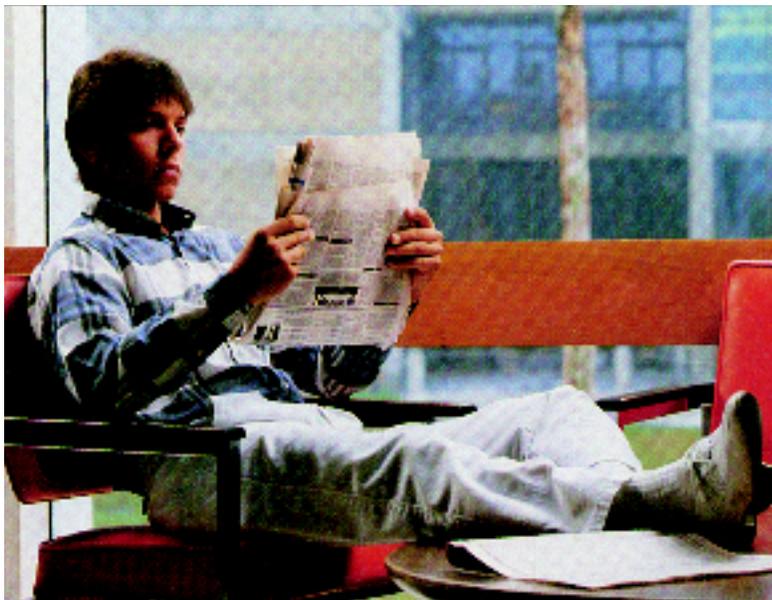
Read Alone Unless You Are Working With Other Readers

Family members, friends, or others who are not in a study mode may interrupt your concentration. If you prefer to read alone, establish a relatively interruption-proof place and time, such as an out-of-the-way spot at the library or an after-class hour in an empty classroom. If you study at home and live with others, try putting a "Quiet" sign on the door.

Find a Comfortable Location

Many students study at a library desk. Others prefer an easy chair at the library or at home, or even the floor. Choose a spot comfortable enough for hours of reading but not so cushy that you fall asleep. Make sure that you have adequate lighting and aren't too hot or cold. Choose a regular reading place and time. Choose a spot or two that you like and return often. Also, choose a time when you feel alert and focused. Try reading just before or after the class for which the reading is assigned, if you can. Eventually, you will associate preferred places and times with focused reading.

Turn off the television. For most people, reading and television don't mix.



Courtesy of Superstock.

Building Comprehension and Speed

Most students lead busy lives, carrying heavy academic loads while perhaps working a job or even caring for a family. It's difficult to make time to study at all, let alone handle the reading assignments for your classes. Increasing your reading comprehension and speed will save you valuable time and effort. Because greater comprehension is the primary goal and actually promotes faster reading, make comprehension your priority over speed.

Methods for Increasing Reading Comprehension

Following are some specific strategies for increasing your understanding of what you read:

Continually Build Your Knowledge Through Reading and Studying

What you already know before you read a passage will determine your ability to understand and remember important ideas. Previous knowledge, including vocabulary, facts, and ideas, gives you a context for what you read.

Establish Your Purpose for Reading

When you establish what you want to get out of your reading, you will be able to determine what level of understanding you need to reach and, therefore, on what you need to focus. A detailed discussion of reading purposes follows later in this chapter.

Remove the Barriers of Negative Self-Talk

Instead of telling yourself that you cannot understand, think positively. Tell yourself: *I can learn this material. I am a good reader.*

Think Critically

Ask yourself questions. Do you understand the sentence, paragraph, or chapter you just read? Are ideas and supporting examples clear? Could you explain what you just read to someone else? Take in the concepts that titles, headings, subheadings, figures, and photographs communicate to you.

Methods for Increasing Reading Speed

The average American adult reads between 150 and 350 words per minute, and faster readers can be capable of speeds up to 1,000 words per minute. However, the human eye can only move so fast; reading speeds in excess of 350 words per minute involve *skimming* and *scanning*. The following suggestions will help increase your reading speed:

- **Try to read groups of words rather than single words.**
- **Avoid using your finger to point to your reading because this will slow your pace.**
- **When reading narrow columns, focus your eyes in the middle of the column. With practice, you'll be able to read the entire column width as you read down the page.**
- **Avoid *vocalization*—speaking the words or moving your lips—when reading.**
- **Avoid thinking each word to yourself as you read it, a practice known as *subvocalization*.**

Expanding Your Vocabulary

Vocabulary is a work in progress—part of lifelong learning is continually learning new words. A strong vocabulary increases reading speed and comprehension; when you understand the words in your reading material, you don't have to stop as often to think about what they mean. Improve your vocabulary by reading and writing words in context and by using a dictionary.

Reading and Writing Words in Context: Natural Language Development

Most people learn words best when they read and use them in written or spoken language. Although a definition tells you what a word means, it may not include a context. Using a word in context after defining it will help to anchor the information so that you can remember it and continue to build on it. Here are some strategies for using context to solidify your learning of new vocabulary words.

- **Use new words in a sentence or two right away. Do this immediately after reading their definitions while everything is still fresh in your mind.**
- **Reread the sentence where you originally saw the word. Go over it a few times to make sure that you understand how the word is used.**
- **Use the word over the next few days whenever it may apply. Try it while talking with friends, writing letters or notes, or in your own thoughts.**

- Consider where you may have seen or heard the word before. When you learn a word, going back to sentences you previously didn't "get" may solidify your understanding. For example, most children learn the Pledge of Allegiance by rote without understanding what *allegiance* means. Later, when they learn the definition of *allegiance*, the pledge provides a context that helps them better understand the word.
- Seek knowledgeable advice. If after looking up a word you still have trouble with its meaning, ask an instructor or friend to help you figure it out.

Use a Dictionary

When reading a textbook, the first "dictionary" to search is its glossary. The definitions there are usually limited to the meaning of the term as it is used in the text. Standard dictionaries provide broader information such as word origin, pronunciation, parts of speech, and multiple meanings. Using a dictionary whenever you read will increase your comprehension. Buy a standard dictionary, keep it nearby, and consult it for help in understanding passages that contain unfamiliar words.

You may not always have time to use the following suggestions, but when you can use them, they will help you make the most of your dictionary.

- Read every meaning of a word, not just the first. Think critically about which meaning suits the context of the word in question and choose the one that makes the most sense to you.
- Substitute a word or phrase from the definition for the word. Use the definition you have chosen. Imagine, for example, that you read the following sentence and do not know the word *indoctrinated*:
 - The cult indoctrinated its members to reject society's values.
- In the dictionary, you find several definitions, including *brainwashed* and *instructed*. You decide that the one closest to the correct meaning is *brainwashed*. With this term, the sentence reads as follows:
 - The cult brainwashed its members to reject society's values.

Facing the challenges of reading is only the first step. The next important step is to examine why you are reading any given piece of material.

Why Define Your Purpose for Reading?

As with other aspects of your education, asking questions will help you make the most of your efforts. When you define your purpose, you ask yourself *why* you are reading a particular piece of material. One way to do this is by completing this sentence: "In reading this material, I intend to define/learn/answer/achieve" With a clear purpose in mind, you can decide how much time and what kind of effort to expend on various reading assignments.

Achieving your reading purpose requires adapting to different types of reading materials. Being a flexible reader—adjusting your reading strategies and pace—will help you to adapt successfully.

Purpose Determines Reading Strategy

When you know why you are reading something, you can decide how best to approach it. There are four reading purposes: reading for understanding, reading to evaluate critically, reading for practical application, and reading for pleasure.

In college, studying involves reading for the purpose of comprehending the material. The two main components of comprehension are *general ideas* and *specific facts or examples*. These components depend upon each other. Facts and examples help to explain or support ideas, and ideas provide a framework that helps the reader to remember facts and examples.

- **General ideas.** Reading for a general idea is rapid reading that seeks an overview of the material. You search for general ideas by focusing on headings, subheadings, and summary statements.
- **Specific facts or examples.** At times, readers may focus on locating specific pieces of information, for example, the stages of intellectual development in children. Often, a reader may search for examples that support or explain general ideas, for example, the causes of economic recession. Because you know exactly what you are looking for, you can skim the material quickly.

Critical evaluation involves understanding. It means approaching the material with an open mind, examining causes and effects, evaluating ideas, and asking questions that test the writer's argument and search for assumptions. Critical reading brings an understanding of material that goes beyond basic information recall.

A third purpose for reading is to gather usable information that you can apply toward a specific goal. When you read a computer manual or an instruction sheet for assembling a gas grill, your goal is to learn how to do something. Reading and action usually go hand in hand. Remembering the specifics requires a certain degree of general comprehension.

Some materials are read for entertainment, such as *Sports Illustrated* magazine or the latest John Grisham courtroom thriller. Recreational reading may also go beyond materials that seem obviously designed to entertain. Whereas some people may read a Jane Austen novel for comprehension, as in a class assignment, others may read her books for pleasure.

Conclusion

Reading is an essential skill because you use it every day of your life. Do not allow weak reading skills to interfere with the life goals that you have set for yourself. You will need to be a good reader to succeed in school, obtain a job, and advance in the work force. As with your other communication skills, you must practice reading daily to improve your reading skills.

Learning vocabulary is an ongoing process. It continues throughout your entire life. Look at the following examples:

- At the age of 4 you probably knew 5,600 words.
- At the age of 5 you probably knew 9,600 words.
- At the age of 6 you probably knew 14,700 words.
- At the age of 7 you probably knew 21,200 words.
- At the age of 8 you probably knew 26,300 words.
- At the age of 9 you probably knew 29,300 words.
- At the age of 10 you probably knew 34,300 words.

This demonstrates that the older you become, the more you learn, and the more vocabulary you will know. No matter what your age, you must continue to learn. Words are “symbols” for ideas. These ideas formulate knowledge which is gained largely through words.

In the next lesson, you will examine

[Some of the material used in this lesson was adapted from

- Virginia Tech—Division of Student Affairs—Cook Counseling Center at www.ucc.vt.edu
- Mrs. Dowling’s Virtual Classroom at www.dowlingcentral.com/MrsD.html
- Context Area Reading: Literacy Across the Curriculum]

Lesson Review

1. How does previewing material help your comprehension?
2. Compare and contrast empirical, value, and analytical questions.
3. Explain three hints for difficult reading.
4. How does note taking help you remember important facts?