

# The Purpose of Reading.

The purpose of reading is to connect the ideas on the page to what you already know. If you don't know anything about a subject, then pouring words of text into your mind is like pouring water into your hand. You don't retain much. For example, try reading these numbers:

7516324 This is hard to read and remember.

751-6324 This is easier because of chunking.

123-4567 This is easy to read because of prior knowledge and structure.

Similarly, if you like sports, then reading the sports page is easy. You have a framework in your mind for reading, understanding and storing information.

## Improving Comprehension.

Reading comprehension requires motivation, mental frameworks for holding ideas, concentration and good study techniques. Here are some suggestions.

### **Develop a broad background.**

Broaden your background knowledge by reading newspapers, magazines and books. Become interested in world events.

### **Know the structure of paragraphs.**

Good writers construct paragraphs that have a beginning, middle and end. Often, the first sentence will give an overview that helps provide a framework for adding details. Also, look for transitional words, phrases or paragraphs that change the topic.

### **Identify the type of reasoning.**

Does the author use cause and effect reasoning, hypothesis, model building, induction or deduction, systems thinking?

### **Anticipate and predict.**

Really smart readers try to anticipate the author and predict future ideas and questions. If you're right, this reinforces your understanding. If you're wrong, you make adjustments quicker.

### **Look for the method of organization.**

Is the material organized chronologically, serially, logically, functionally, spatially or hierarchical? See section 10 for more examples on organization.

### **Create motivation and interest.**

Preview material, ask questions, discuss ideas with classmates. The stronger your interest, the greater your comprehension.

### **Pay attention to supporting cues.**

Study pictures, graphs and headings. Read the first and last paragraph in a chapter, or the first sentence in each section.

**Highlight, summarize and review.**

Just reading a book once is not enough. To develop a deeper understanding, you have to highlight, summarize and review important ideas.

**Build a good vocabulary.**

For most educated people, this is a lifetime project. The best way to improve your vocabulary is to use a dictionary regularly. You might carry around a pocket dictionary and use it to look up new words. Or, you can keep a list of words to look up at the end of the day. Concentrate on roots, prefixes and endings.

**Use a systematic reading technique like SQR3.**

Develop a systematic reading style, like the SQR3 method and make adjustments to it, depending on priorities and purpose. The SQR3 steps include Survey, Question, Read, Recite and Review.

**Monitor effectiveness.**

Good readers monitor their attention, concentration and effectiveness. They quickly recognize if they've missed an idea and backup to reread it.

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