Reading Skills: Be a Better Reader

Be an Active Reader

Good reading is not simply a matter of taking in information—you need to do more than that. Think of the reading process as a triangle: the author, the text, and you. They are all connected. You are a key part in the reading process.

How can you read more actively? Try these strategies:

- Predict what you are going to read.
- Consider what you already know about the topic.
- Read with a pen in your hand. Mark or underline the main ideas of the text.
- Mark any sections of the text that are hard to understand, or any new vocabulary.
- Write down any questions you have.
- Consider your responses to the text: do you agree or disagree?
- Use symbols (*, !, ?, 😊) to show your responses to the text.
- After you read, check that you remember and understand it; one way to do this is to tell someone else about it.

Use Different Ways to Read a Text

In the course of your day, you will read many different texts—for college, for pleasure, or for your daily activities. You will not read all of them in the same way. There are different
approaches to reading, and choosing the right strategy can often save you time. Here are some
you can use:

**Predicting.** Whatever you are reading, don’t just jump in and start reading the first
paragraph or the first sentence. Guess what the text is going to be about.

**Skimming.** When you skim a text, you read it quickly to get the gist of it. You are not
concerned about understanding every small detail at this stage—you just want an overview.

**Scanning.** Scanning is also a form of quick reading, but it is different from skimming.
Scanning is what you do when you want to find a specific piece of information.

**Careful reading.** Many times, it is not enough to skim a text quickly. You will need to read
it carefully to make sure you understand it properly.

**Be a Thoughtful Reader**

The strategies above—predicting, skimming, scanning, and careful reading—are designed to
help you to understand what you are reading. However, you also need to think about what you
are reading.

When you read thoughtfully, you ask yourself questions like these:

- What kind of text is this? Is it from a textbook, a magazine, or a website?
- Who wrote it? What do I know about this writer?
- Why is the writer telling me this?
- Is the writer giving facts, or does the text present the writer’s personal opinion?
- Can I trust the information contained in the text?
- How does this text compare to other things I have learned about the subject?
- How does it compare to my own experiences of the subject?

Answering questions like these will help you to become a more thoughtful reader.