

Building Comprehension Strategies

Reading is a skill that can become easier with practice. There are some things you can do to make reading simpler and more enjoyable.

Reading comprehension means understanding what you read. We all have heard someone (maybe even ourselves) say, "I read it, but I didn't understand it." Good readers develop some strategies to help them understand what they read. All readers can use the following strategies to build better comprehension.

Build on your existing knowledge

- Examine the title, cover, table of contents, and index before you begin reading. Read the information about the author.
- Flip through the book, brochure, or pamphlet and read the headings, chapter titles or highlighted information.
- Look at the graphics (photographs, drawing, charts, graphs).
- Ask yourself what you already know about this subject. (This gives you a base understanding of the information you will be reading.)
- What do you know about the author?

Determine your purpose for reading

- Are you reading for pleasure, to obtain information, or to learn how to perform a task?
- Make a list of questions concerning the topic about which you are reading. They can be "who," "what," "where," "when," or "why" questions or questions asking if you agree with what the author says. You may add other questions as you read and find answers to the initial ones.
- Read to find the answers to your questions. Remember, all the answers may not be there.

Make predictions

- Make some predictions about what you are going to read. What do you expect to learn? What do you think will happen next? Your predictions often will change, or be revised, as you read.

Summarize or paraphrase what you have read

- Stop after a few paragraphs and summarize what you have read. If you have trouble summarizing or do not understand a passage, reread it. There are times when everyone needs to reread for the meaning to become clear to him or her. Try to figure out why you don't understand. Are there words you don't recognize? Are there any clues to help you with the meaning of new words?
- Visualize — create pictures in your mind — when you are reading. Turning words from the text into "pictures" that are meaningful to you helps you understand and remember what you read. Ask yourself what the setting of the story looks like, what the characters look like, and what you would ask the writer if you could.
- Think about what you have read. Were your questions answered? Did you have to create new questions? Were your predictions accurate? Did you have to adjust your predictions? What did you learn from what you read? What was the writer's message?

By following these suggestions, you can build a better understanding of what you read — your main goal for reading.