

Study Skills

Four basic skills

1. **Listening (semantic aspect of language)**
2. **Speaking (phonetic aspect of language)**
3. **Reading (phonetic cum graphic aspect of language)**
4. **Writing (graphic aspect of language)**

Definition of Reading

- 1 . Reading is making meaning from printed/written words. It involves identifying [recognition] the words and constructing meaning from them [comprehension].
- 2 . An interactive process in which the decoder's prior knowledge of the world interacts with the meaning in the text.
- 3 . Reading is the process of looking at a series of written symbols [letters, punctuation marks and spaces] and getting meaning from them by converting them into words , sentences and paragraphs which communicate something to us.
- 4 Reading is a cognitive process of decoding symbols to derive meaning.

Introduction To Study Skills/ Reading skills

Reading is one of the four basic skills necessary for effective communication. Other skills are listening; speaking and writing .Reading is a means for language learning like listening and are called the receptive skills. Speaking and writing are productive skills. Different situations and purposes require these skills in different combinations. In most situations listening pairs up with speaking and reading pairs up with writing. All these skills in themselves have further different forms and functions so are there different reading styles for different purposes. In everyday life we read newspapers, magazines, navel, dramas, poem, reports, mails and letters. For every purpose there is a specific technique used by the reader. We may be reading for enjoyment, examinations and assignments or collecting some information, completing a task as part of our job such as getting the gist of a report. Other reading styles are used for testing comprehension and writing ability of the students. Different purposes will require a particular type of reading from us. The following are the specific types used for their required purposes. They are called study or reading skills.

1 **USUAL Reading:**

The most habitual manner of reading is called usual reading. When we are reading newspapers, magazines, novels, reviews, reports etc., we use this style . While using usual reading technique we do not hurry or rush forward to read up what we are reading nor are we concerned with the great depth of understanding the material. A common or average reader can read up to 300 to 350 words per minute (wpm). However, individual readers vary in their rate of words per minute. A specialized reader can read at about 500 words to 600 words per minute. Finally, usual reading is mostly taken up by those people who know reading well.

2 ACTIVE READING

Active reading is a useful study technique for college students to pull out maximum information from either a chapter or whole of their textbook and use the information for their needs such as in exams and assignments. Active reading is an effective learning method based on the simple principle that repetition is the mother of all learning and that reading becomes only real learning and understanding when it is repeated. This is called active reading because it combines the basic skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing and utilizes more senses. It is carried out in 6 steps Survey, Question, Read, Record, Recite and Review. This technique forms the acronym SQ4R which discourage direct reading and follow the above analytical steps to be actively engaged with the content.

SQ4R

1 Survey [scanning]

Survey means to warm up by having a bird eye view of the text quickly to get an overall impression. This first step survey advises that one should resist the temptation to read the book and instead first go through a chapter and note the headings, sub-headings and other outstanding features, such as figures, tables, marginal information, and summary paragraphs. This survey only takes some minutes, but it familiarizes and provides an outline or framework for what will be presented. It also activates your previous knowledge of the topic or any other related information.

2 Questions

After the survey a reader formulates questions about the content of the chapter. If a chapter has exercise questions they should also be noted. Have set questions help you filter out redundant information and skip or simply skim it when it comes to actual reading. Formulating questions may include converting headings and sub-headings into questions. Other more general questions may also be formulated as : What is this chapter about? What question is this chapter trying to answer? How does this information help me?

3 Read (R1)

Use the background work "S" and "Q" in order to begin reading actively. This means reading in order to answer the previous formulated questions .look specifically for answers in the content of the text. Do not skim paragraphs at this point because there is a risk of leaving out important information.. Use pen or pencil to underline, highlight and annotate parts you find relevant to your questions. If the information you get from the content is not enough for your need, take help from other books and sources like the internet.

4 Record (R2)

The second "R" refers to the part known as Record. It is simply note taking. Here the reader takes important information from what he has read, underlined and notes it down in his own words.

5 Recite [R3]

The reader should try to recite from memory what was learned and recorded in the same manner as telling someone else about the information. It is important that the reader use their own words. If you are still unable to formulate and conceptualize the material read the text and notes again. A good way to do this is to try recalling and identifying major points and answers to questions from the "Q" step. This recital step is helpful to retrieve and boost long term memory for the material.

6 Review [R4]

The final "R4" is for "Review." It means studying only the information retrieved from the early 4 steps. It enables to transfer your information into real learning and makes it part of your permanent memory. Review regularly and repeat the process until it becomes permanent. After reviewing the material a few times, it will just only take skimming to recall the key points for examination and assignments. This technique will save you reading all the content again. Only revising your notes and scanning the text book before exams will be enough.

Features of Active Reading

Features 1 of Active Reading

The above six distinct steps can be divided into three stages here as:

1. (pre reading stage) 1 survey + 2 Questions
2. (Reading Stage) 3 Read + 4 Record 5 Recite
3. (Post Reading Stage) 6 Review

1 Pre Reading Stage Before reading the text is surveyed or scanned to form a general understanding of the material being discussed. This gives the reader a general framework for their reading and enables to form their own questions regarding the given points in the chapter/text.

2 Reading stage

Reading is interactively carried out with a pencil for highlighting key words and phrases. At this stage the reader has to be ready to mark annotations in the margins of the text and take notes

in the form of his observations. One can read the text again and again if they have trouble in comprehension. During reading one has to be active enough to record the information in written form using their own words. At this stage one has to try to recall and recite out loud in their own words what they have so far learned.

3. Post Reading Stage

The last stage is to review and revise the information retrieved from the first two stages. Reviewing saves time and better equips you to use the pulled out information in ways required such as exams and assignments.

Feature 2 Mirrors Conversation

Active reading is like a conversation between you and the writer of the text. Good conversations achieve a balance between listening and responding. This give-and-take process drives human discourse. While one participant speaks, the other listens. Although the listener appears passive on the surface but he is most likely already preparing his response. He may evaluate what his partner says, tests and matches his own ideas with that of the other one. The listener is continuously accepting or rejecting part or all of the statement. When he responds, he expresses his reaction, or asks a question about something he does not yet understand. Active reading mirrors this process of listening closely. Thus an active reader “listens” to the text, evaluating to see if it matches and offers something or what is given simply differs from his current understanding. He tries to store certain information and asks questions if something remains unclear. The reader is also likely to look for answers in subsequent sections of the text or elsewhere in some cases. His final goal is to make a note of his own in the form of some points, an essay, a paragraph, a summary, a paraphrase or as his /her needs may be. In fact, reading is in many ways better than conversation, because, you can revisit a text again for clarification. Spoken word on the other hand, unless recorded, disappears into the past, often along with part or the entire message the speaker was attempting to convey. When you read, you can move forward and backward to make sure you capture every nuance.

Feature 3 Annotations or Taking Notes

Annotation is an important feature of active reading. It is the act of writing notes to oneself in the blank spaces of the page. It is not the same as underlining or highlighting, neither of which promotes active reading. A simple line underneath a passage containing no information merely indicates that you found a certain passage more important than the surrounding text.

Annotation, on the other hand, is a record of your active responses to the text during the act of reading. simple phrase summarizing a paragraph, a pointed question, or an emphatic expression of approval or disbelief all indicate spirited engagement with the text and are the signs of annotation .Annotations are your own responses after encountering the text and help you to record, remember and use such information in future well.

Feature 4 Requires Strategies and Adjustment

Active reading requires different strategies. As one is not expected to run several miles without rest, similarly one cannot sustain active reading longer than his mind and body allow. Active reading requires energy and attention as well as devotion. Short rest periods between readings allow you to maintain focus and deliberate on what you have learned. If you remain diligent in your reading you will find your reading practice more fruitful. Remember not to push yourself past the point at which you stop paying attention. If your mind begins to wander, take some time to relax. Ideally, you should read gradually. When and where you read can be as important as how long you read. Plan your reading sessions for hours when your mental energy is at its height—usually during daylight hours. Likewise, you should select a location free of distractions because a momentary distraction can interrupt the conversation you are having with your assigned text.

3 Intensive Reading

Intensive reading can be called careful reading. The technique is used to prepare students for tasks and texts they encounter in schools and colleges. As part of daily lessons taken by students from teachers in classrooms fall in this category. The text to be read intensively include words which are a little above the students learnt storage of words and listed from easy to difficult order. Students are prepared to learn, to read and understand the comprehension by their instructors. There are good results of intensive reading technique especially in preparing students to develop their knowledge of words, concepts and grammar of their target language. These results are achieved by making the students study short texts in detail. Intensive reading is for further progress in language learning, mostly under the guidance of a teacher. The technique enables the student to explain difficulties of structure, the vocabulary and idioms. Thus, intensive reading can also develop the writing skill of the students. Intensive reading requires slower speed and higher degree of attention. This technique develops, and refines students' vocabulary, sentence structure, and socio-cultural insight in their target language.

4 Extensive Reading

A technique in which large reading materials are assigned from a wide list of contents to improve the reading habit, speed and understanding of the students/readers in the target language is called extensive reading technique. This particular style of reading can also be called as “free reading” and “wide reading”. In this situation where students are taught to master this style of reading, it is reasonable to select for them a wide range of books and contents according to their level and interests. While practicing extensive reading, a large amount of material such as a novel, is presented for rapid reading to students. The purpose is to make the readers get a gist of material at hand. Readers are to focus only on the reading itself rather than the particular structure of that reading material. The purpose of teaching students to learn reading extensively is to encourage them to read by themselves. Moreover, it aims to encourage readers to cover a large amount of material on a comparatively short time. It is not meant for analyzing. The selected material for extensive reading is relatively easy. The listed material is placed before students who are free to choose for himself according to his interest. Extensive

reading develops according to the ability of an individual. The content for extensive reading involves the choice of less complex structures (sentences) less extensive vocabulary. Thus the student read it directly and fluently in the target language. It would be a good idea to present the material for readers in graded difficulty order. New items of vocabulary are introduced slowly in such a way that their meaning can be understood /deduced from the context or quickly guessed. Such material may be short stories, novels, articles and extracts from newspapers and magazines.

5 Speed Reading/Accelerated Reading:

The speed reading or accelerated reading is like the third gear in which we read fast all the text to save time. In certain situation, because of the lack of time and great quantities of material to cover, a reader has to alert himself and try to read quite aggressively. Following this style, a higher rate of fluency is maintained than usual. Speed reading demands a greater energy. A good reader maintains his speed and covering power through the course of reading his contents. An average reader has to look when to take up this style because it is hard to maintain the technique for a long period. Therefore, it is a good idea to use the third gear only occasionally when the situation demands. Speed reading can be an assignment for students to improve their reading power or it can be part of one's job in a workplace. Twenty first century offers access to every information. However, the lack of time and reading phobia detain modern readers from reading. Speed reading allows us to read more material.

The following are the factors which affect reading speed.

- 1 Faulty eye movement.
- 2 Regression or re-reading.
- 3 Word-by-word reading.
4. Vocalizing.
5. Poor concentration.
- 6 Failure to find relevance in different part of a reading material.
- 7 Turning of page.
- 8 Absence of a pointer.
- 10- Poor vocabulary.

6 Skimming and Scanning

Skimming and scanning together are called the fourth gear. They are the same as speed/accelerated reading, but the difference is that in speed reading you read everything at a high rate. In skimming and scanning you deliberately look for certain parts, skipping a great deal of material.

The difference between skimming and scanning: Skimming and scanning are two different styles to cover content. Although, both the styles are alike in that you do not read all the material. The difference lies in the way you go about each technique.

6.1 Skimming

This technique is used to get the "gist" or an overview of a text. It is used also, to sample a book in the library or a bookstall before deciding to take it out or simply buy it. You use this style to cover a lot of material in limited time. The gist you get of some article/book gives a basis for the selection of books/articles in a setting. It is a good idea to read what is worth reading, why waste time if it is not. The goal and purpose in skimming content is always to obtain an impression of the whole by taking a glance to some parts. The following are the steps in skimming an article.

Read the title because it is the shortest possible summary of the content.

Read the introduction or lead in paragraph.

Read the first paragraph completely. If there are sub-headings, read each one, looking for relationships among them. Read the first sentence of each remaining paragraph, because the main idea of a paragraph appears in the first sentence. If the paragraph begins with anecdote or question, then you will find the last sentence more valuable.

Look for clue-word answers like who, what, when, how and proper nouns, unusual words like capitalized words and numbering.

Underlying, asterisks and italics and pictures.

Qualifying adjective like best, worst, most etc.

Read final paragraph completely. Skimming is a useful reading skill. It enables us to read faster, form a general idea or opinion about the text and save our time.

6.2 Scanning:

Scanning is used to look for a question or a specific piece of information. It might be a telephone number, a particular quotation in a book or a supporting fact to use in a discussion. When scanning our purpose/goal is to find just the information we want when it is found, we may finish scanning. In daily life this skill is used when a newspaper is read, We know that a newspaper is not read word for word; rather we scan the paper, to find what we are interested in. Scanning is useful to find out the specific material e-g name, date, or fact without reading the entire article. Scanning rapidly covers a great deal of material in order to locate a specific piece of information. The following are the steps in scanning a text.

Always keep in mind what it is you are searching for. If you hold the image of the word or idea in your mind clearly, it is likelier to appear more clearly than the surrounding words.

Anticipate in what form the idea is likely to appear, like number, proper noun, quotes, italics etc.

Analyze the organization of the content before starting to scan it. Let your eyes run rapidly over several lines. When you seek the information read the entire sentence.

In scanning you must be willing to skip over large section of texts without understanding them.

Skimming, Scanning and Speed Reading

Speed reading may be called the third gear and tries to read everything, while skimming and scanning may be called the fourth gear in reading and deliberately skip over a great section. Speed reading technique involves reading the whole material at a high speed. and is mostly an

assigned task to be completed in a limited time. Skimming and scanning are much more rapid processes of reading. Speed reading is therefore rightly called the third gear of reading. Furthermore, skimming and scanning are two similar techniques in process but different in purpose. Skimming is used to find out the general information, gist or overview of a content, while scanning is used for specific piece of information.

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