

Reading Comprehension Difficulties

Definition:

Reading comprehension is a process in which knowledge of language, knowledge of the world, and knowledge of a topic interact to make complex meaning. It involves decoding, word association, context association, summary, analogy, integration, and critique.

The Symptoms:

Students who have difficulty with reading comprehension may have trouble identifying and understanding important ideas in reading passages, may have trouble with basic reading skills such as word recognition, may not remember what they've read, and may frequently avoid reading due to frustration.

How to improve your reading comprehension:

It is important to note that this is not just an English issue—all school subjects require reading comprehension. The following techniques can help to improve your comprehension:

- ✓ Take a look at subheadings and any editor's introduction before you begin reading so that you can predict what the reading will be about. Ask yourself what you know about a subject before you begin reading to activate prior knowledge.
- ✓ Ask questions about the text as you read—this engages your brain.
- ✓ Take notes as you read, either in the book or on separate paper: make note of questions you may have, interesting ideas, and important concepts, anything that strikes your fancy. This engages your brain as you read and gives you something to look back on so that you remember what to discuss with your instructor and/or classmates or possibly use in your work for the class.
- ✓ Make note of how texts in the subject area are structured you know how and where to look for different types of information. Do main ideas often come at the beginnings of paragraphs? The ends of paragraphs? Are there subheadings to help organize information? Knowing these things will help the speed of your reading as well as comprehension. Feel free to ask your instructor during office hours for tips about how reading for their discipline is often structured.
- ✓ Take time to reflect on what you have read. How are the passages or chapters inter-related? How does the information fit into details you've already learned? What do you want or need more information on?
- ✓ Reread as necessary. Rereading does not mean you failed the first time—the best readers reread at least parts of what they've read for clarification or review.
- ✓ Summarize your reading—make note of main ideas and important elements of support. This helps you to see what you've understood as well as helps you to retain what you've read. Feel free to check with your instructor during office hours to see if you are on track.

Technology:

- Reading with eyes, ears and fingers is all equal; therefore reading on technology is no less equal
- Speech synthesis media such as Kurzweil improve proofreading, reading attention, reading rates, and comprehension

