

# Reading and Learning: Getting Started

## Focusing on . . . College Success



### LEARNING GOALS

*This chapter will show you how to*

- 1 Understand what is expected in college
- 2 Build your concentration
- 3 Understand and analyze your learning style
- 4 Improve your comprehension
- 5 Read and think visually
- 6 Use writing to learn
- 7 Learn from and with other students

**Y**our first semester of college is often the most difficult because you don't know what to expect. The classes you have selected are challenging, and your instructors are demanding. This chapter will help you discover how to learn most effectively and help you approach the reading and study demands of your courses successfully.

College is very different from any other type of educational experience. It is different from high school, job training programs, adult education, and technical training programs. New and different types of learning are demanded, and you need new skills and techniques to meet these demands.

## UNDERSTAND WHAT IS EXPECTED IN COLLEGE

**1** **LEARNING GOAL**  
Understand  
what is expected  
in college

Following is a list of statements about college. Treat it like a quiz, if you wish. Decide whether each statement is true or false, and write *T* for true or *F* for false in the space provided. Each statement will make you think about the reading and study demands of college. Check your answers by reading the paragraph following each item. As you work through this quiz, you will find out a little about what is expected of you in college. You will see whether or not you have an accurate picture of what college work involves. You will also see how this text will help you to become a better, more successful student.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. For every hour I spend in class, I should spend one hour studying outside of class.

Many students feel that even one hour for each class (or 15 hours per week for students carrying a 15 credit-hour load) is a lot. Actually, the rule of thumb used by many instructors is two hours of study for each class hour. So you can see that you are expected to do a great deal of reading, studying, and learning on your own time. The purpose of this text is to help you read and learn in the easiest and best way for you.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. I should expect to read about 80 textbook pages per week in each of my courses.

A survey of freshman courses at one college indicated that the average course assignment was roughly 80 pages per week. This may seem like a lot of reading—and it is. You will need to build your reading skills to handle this task. To help you do this, techniques for understanding and remembering what you read, improving your concentration, and handling difficult reading assignments will be suggested throughout this text.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The more facts I memorize, the higher my exam grades will be.

Learning a large number of facts is no guarantee of a high grade in a course. Some instructors and the exams they give are concerned with your ability to see how facts and ideas fit together, or to evaluate ideas, make comparisons, and recognize trends. This text will help you to do all these things by



showing you how to read textbook chapters and organize and remember information.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. There are a lot of words I do not know, but my vocabulary is about as good as it needs to be.

For each college course you take, there will be new words to learn. Some will be everyday words; others will be specialized or technical. This text will show you how to develop your vocabulary by learning new words, figuring out words you do not know, and using reference sources.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. College instructors will tell me exactly what to learn for each exam.

College instructors seldom tell you exactly what to learn or review. They expect you to decide what is important and to learn that information. In this text you will learn how to identify what is important in sentences and paragraphs and how to follow authors' thought patterns.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. College instructors expect me to react to, evaluate, and criticize what I read.

Beyond understanding the content of textbooks, articles, and essays, students need to be able to criticize and evaluate ideas. To help you read and think critically, this text will show you how to interpret what you read, find the author's purpose, and ask critical questions.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The only assignments that instructors give are readings in the textbook.

Instructors often assign readings in a variety of sources including periodicals, newspapers, reference and library books, and online sources. These readings are intended to add to the information presented in your text and by your instructor. The reading selections contained in this text will give you the opportunity to practice and apply your skills to readings taken from a variety of sources. These selections are similar to the outside readings your instructors will assign.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The best way to read a textbook assignment is to turn to the correct page, start reading, and continue until you reach the end of the assignment.

There are numerous things you can do before you read, while you read, and after you read that can improve your comprehension and retention. These techniques for improving



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your comprehension and recall are presented throughout this text. For example, later in this chapter you will learn techniques for building your concentration. This text will also show you how to preview, think about what you will read, use questions to guide your reading, and strengthen comprehension and recall.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Rereading a textbook chapter is the best way to prepare for an exam on that chapter.

Rereading is actually one of the poorest ways to review. Besides, it is often dull and time-consuming. You will learn about six more-effective alternatives: *highlighting*, *marking*, *paraphrasing*, *outlining*, *mapping*, and *summarizing*.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. You can never know whether you have understood a textbook reading assignment until you take an exam on the chapter.

As you read, it is possible and important to keep track of and evaluate your level of understanding. You will learn how to keep track of your comprehension, recognize comprehension signals, and strengthen your comprehension.

By analyzing the above statements and the correct responses, you can see that college is a lot of work, much of which you must do on your own. However, college is also a new, exciting experience that will acquaint you with fresh ideas and opportunities.

The opportunity of college lies ahead of you. The skills you are about to learn, along with plenty of hard work, will make your college experience a meaningful and valuable one.

## BUILD YOUR CONCENTRATION

### 2 LEARNING GOAL Build your concentration

Do you have difficulty concentrating? If so, you are like many other college students who say that lack of concentration is the main reason they cannot read or study effectively. Building concentration involves two steps: (1) controlling your surroundings, and (2) focusing your attention.

### Controlling Your Surroundings

Poor concentration is often the result of distractions caused by the time and place you have chosen to study. Here are a few ideas to help you overcome poor concentration:

#### Controlling Distractions

1. **Choose a place to read where you will not be interrupted.** If people interrupt you at home or in the dormitory, try the campus library.



2. **Find a place that is relatively free of distractions and temptations.** Avoid places with outside noise, friends, a television set, or loud music.
3. **Silence your cell phone and ignore texts.** If left on, these will break your concentration and cost you time.
4. **Read in the same place each day.** Eventually you will get in the habit of reading there, and concentration will become easier, almost automatic.
5. **Do not read where you are too comfortable.** It is easy to lose concentration, become drowsy, or fall asleep when you are too relaxed.
6. **Choose a time of day when you are mentally alert.** Concentration is easier if you are not tired, hungry, or drowsy.

### Focusing Your Attention

Even if you follow these suggestions, you may still find it difficult to become organized and stick with your reading. This takes self-discipline, but the following suggestions may help:

### Strengthening Your Concentration

1. **Set goals and time limits for yourself.** Before you begin a reading assignment, decide how long it should take, and check to see that you stay on schedule. Before you start an evening of homework, write down what you plan to do and how long each assignment should take. Sample goals for an evening are shown in Figure 1.
2. **Choose and reserve blocks of time each day for reading and study.** Write down what you will study in each time block each day or evening. Working at the same time each day establishes a routine and makes focusing your attention a bit easier.
3. **Vary your reading.** For instance, instead of spending an entire evening on one subject, work for one hour on each of three subjects.
4. **Reward yourself for accomplishing things as planned.** Delay entertainment until after you have finished studying. Use such things as

10/20	
Eng. paper—revise	$\frac{1}{2}$ hr.
Math probs. 1–10	1 hr.
Sociology read pp. 70–82	1 hr.

Figure 1 Goals and Time Limits



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ordering a pizza, texting a friend, or watching a favorite TV program as rewards after you have completed several assignments.

5. **Plan frequent breaks.** Do this at sensible points in your reading—between chapters or after major chapter divisions.
6. **Keep physically as well as mentally active.** Try highlighting, underlining, or making summary notes as you read. These activities will focus your attention on the assignment.

### EXERCISE 1 Analyzing Your Level of Concentration

**Directions:** Answer each of the following questions as honestly as you can. They will help you analyze problems with concentration. Discuss your answers with others in your class.

1. Where do you read and study? \_\_\_\_\_  
What interruptions, if any, occur there? Do you need to find a better place? If so, list a few alternatives.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. How frequently do you respond to text messages? Do you ever turn your phone off while studying? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What is the best time of day for you to read? (If you do not know, experiment with different times until you begin to see a pattern.)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How long do you normally read without a break?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What type of distraction bothers you the most?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. On average, how many different assignments do you work on in one evening?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



7. What types of rewards might work for you?

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**EXERCISE 2 Identifying Distractions**

**Directions:** As you read your next textbook assignment, either for this course or for another, be alert for distractions. Each time your mind wanders, try to identify the source of the distraction. List in the space provided the cause of each break in your concentration and a way to eliminate each, if possible.

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**EXERCISE 3 Setting Goals**

**Directions:** Before you begin your next study session, make a list in the space provided of what you intend to accomplish and how long you should spend on each task.

Assignment	Time
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____

## ANALYZE YOUR LEARNING STYLE

**3 LEARNING GOAL**  
Understand and analyze your learning style

Not everyone learns in the same way. In fact, everyone has his or her own individual way of learning, which is called *learning style*. The following section contains a brief learning style questionnaire that will help you analyze how you learn and prepare an action plan for learning what you read.

### Learning Style Questionnaire

**Directions:** Each item presents two choices. Select the alternative that best describes you. In cases in which neither choice suits you, select the one that is closer to your preference. Write the letter of your choice in the space provided.



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### Part One

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I would prefer to follow a set of
  - a. oral directions.
  - b. print directions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. I would prefer to
  - a. attend a lecture given by a famous psychologist.
  - b. read an online article written by the psychologist.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. When I am introduced to someone, it is easier for me to remember the person's
  - a. name.
  - b. face.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. I find it easier to learn new information using
  - a. language (words).
  - b. images (pictures).
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I prefer classes in which the instructor
  - a. lectures and answers questions.
  - b. uses PowerPoint illustrations and videos.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. To follow current events, I would prefer to
  - a. listen to the news on the radio.
  - b. read the newspaper.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. To learn how to repair a flat tire, I would prefer to
  - a. listen to a friend's explanation.
  - b. watch a demonstration.

### Part Two

- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. I prefer to
  - a. work with facts and details.
  - b. construct theories and ideas.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I would prefer a job involving
  - a. following specific instructions.
  - b. reading, writing, and analyzing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. I prefer to
  - a. solve math problems using a formula.
  - b. discover why the formula works.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. I would prefer to write a term paper explaining
  - a. how a process works.
  - b. a theory.





- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. I prefer tasks that require me to
  - a. follow careful, detailed instructions.
  - b. use reasoning and critical analysis.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. For a criminal justice course, I would prefer to
  - a. discover how and when a law can be used.
  - b. learn how and why it became law.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. To learn more about the operation of a robot, I would prefer to
  - a. work with several robots.
  - b. understand the principles on which they operate.

### Part Three

- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. To solve a math problem, I would prefer to
  - a. draw or visualize the problem.
  - b. study a sample problem and use it as a model.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. To best remember something, I
  - a. create a mental picture.
  - b. write it down.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. Assembling a bicycle from a diagram would be
  - a. easy.
  - b. challenging.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. I prefer classes in which I
  - a. handle equipment or work with models.
  - b. participate in a class discussion.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. To understand and remember how a machine works, I would
  - a. draw a diagram.
  - b. write notes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. I enjoy
  - a. drawing or working with my hands.
  - b. speaking, writing, and listening.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. If I were trying to locate an office on an unfamiliar campus, I would prefer
  - a. a map.
  - b. print directions.

### Part Four

- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. For a grade in biology lab, I would prefer to
  - a. work with a lab partner.
  - b. work alone.



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- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. When faced with a difficult personal problem, I prefer to
  - a. discuss it with others.
  - b. resolve it myself.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. Many instructors could improve their classes by
  - a. including more discussion and group activities.
  - b. allowing students to work on their own more frequently.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 25. When listening to a lecturer or speaker, I respond more to the
  - a. person presenting the idea.
  - b. ideas themselves.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 26. When on a team project, I prefer to
  - a. work with several team members.
  - b. divide the tasks and complete those assigned to me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 27. I prefer to shop and do errands
  - a. with friends.
  - b. by myself.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 28. A job in a busy office is
  - a. more appealing than working alone.
  - b. less appealing than working alone.

### Part Five

- \_\_\_\_\_ 29. To make decisions, I rely on
  - a. my experiences and gut feelings.
  - b. facts and objective data.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 30. To complete a task, I
  - a. can use whatever is available to get the job done.
  - b. must have everything I need at hand.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 31. I prefer to express my ideas and feelings through
  - a. music, song, or poetry.
  - b. direct, concise language.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 32. I prefer instructors who
  - a. allow students to be guided by their own interests.
  - b. make their expectations clear and explicit.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 33. I tend to
  - a. challenge and question what I hear and read.
  - b. accept what I hear and read.



- \_\_\_\_\_ 34. I prefer
- a. essay exams.
  - b. objective exams.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 35. In completing an assignment, I prefer to
- a. figure out my own approach.
  - b. be told exactly what to do.

To score your questionnaire, record the total number of *a*'s you selected and the total number of *b*'s for each part of the questionnaire. Record your totals in the scoring grid on the next page.

Now, circle your higher score for each part of the questionnaire. The word below the score you circled indicates a strength of your learning style. The next section explains how to interpret your scores.

### Interpreting Your Scores

The questionnaire was divided into five parts; each part identifies one aspect of your learning style. Each of these five aspects is explained below.

**Part One: Auditory or Visual Learners** This score indicates whether you learn better by listening (auditory) or by seeing (visual). If you have a higher auditory than visual score, you tend to be an auditory learner. That is, you tend to learn more easily by hearing than by reading. A higher visual score suggests strengths with visual modes of learning—reading, studying pictures, reading diagrams, and so forth.

**Part Two: Applied or Conceptual Learners** This score describes the types of learning tasks and learning situations you prefer and find easiest to handle. If you are an applied learner, you prefer tasks that involve real objects and situations. Practical, real-life examples are ideal for you. If you are a conceptual learner, you prefer to work with language and ideas; you do not need practical applications for understanding.

**Part Three: Spatial or Verbal (Nonspatial) Learners** This score reveals your ability to work with spatial relationships. Spatial learners are able to visualize or mentally see how things work or how they are positioned in space. Their strengths may include drawing, assembling, or repairing things. Verbal learners lack skills in positioning things in space. Instead they rely on verbal or language skills.



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Scoring Grid		
Parts	Choice A Total	Choice B Total
Part One	_____	_____
	Auditory	Visual
Part Two	_____	_____
	Applied	Conceptual
Part Three	_____	_____
	Spatial	Verbal
Part Four	_____	_____
	Social	Independent
Part Five	_____	_____
	Creative	Pragmatic

**Part Four: Social or Independent Learners** This score reveals whether you like to work alone or with others. If you are a social learner, you prefer to work with others—both classmates and instructors—closely and directly. You tend to be people oriented and enjoy personal interaction. If you are an independent learner, you prefer to work alone and study alone. You tend to be self-directed or self-motivated and are often goal oriented.

**Part Five: Creative or Pragmatic Learners** This score describes the approach you prefer to take toward learning tasks. Creative learners are imaginative and innovative. They prefer to learn through discovery or experimentation. They are comfortable taking risks and following hunches. Pragmatic learners are practical, logical, and systematic. They seek order and are comfortable following rules.

### Evaluating Your Scores

If you disagree with any part of the learning style questionnaire, go with your own instincts rather than the questionnaire results. The questionnaire is just a quick assessment; trust your knowledge of yourself in areas of dispute.

### Developing a Learning Action Plan

Now that you know more about *how* you learn, you are ready to develop an action plan for learning what you read. Suppose you discovered that you are an auditory learner. You still have to read your assignments, which is a visual task. However, to learn the assignment you should translate the material into an auditory form.



For example, you could repeat aloud, using your own words, information that you want to remember, or you could record key information and play it back. If you also are a social learner, you could work with a classmate, testing each other out loud, or you might form an online study group with several classmates.

Table 1 lists each aspect of learning style and offers suggestions for how to learn from a reading assignment.

<b>TABLE 1 Learning Styles and Reading/Learning Strategies</b>	
<b>If your learning style is . . .</b>	<b>Then the reading/learning strategies to use are . . .</b>
Auditory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• discuss/study with friends</li> <li>• talk aloud when studying</li> <li>• record self-testing questions and answers</li> </ul>
Visual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• draw diagrams, charts, tables</li> <li>• try to visualize events</li> <li>• use films and videos when available</li> <li>• use computer-assisted instruction or tutorials, if available</li> </ul>
Applied	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• think of practical situations to which learning applies</li> <li>• associate ideas with their application</li> <li>• use case studies, examples, and applications to cue your learning</li> </ul>
Conceptual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• organize materials that lack order</li> <li>• use outlining</li> <li>• focus on organizational patterns</li> </ul>
Spatial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use mapping</li> <li>• use outlining</li> <li>• draw diagrams, make charts and sketches</li> <li>• use visualization</li> </ul>
Verbal (Nonspatial)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• translate diagrams and drawings into language</li> <li>• record steps, processes, procedures in words</li> <li>• write summaries</li> <li>• write your interpretation next to textbook drawings, maps, graphics</li> </ul>
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• form study groups, in person or online</li> <li>• find a study partner, in person or online</li> <li>• interact with your instructor</li> <li>• work with a tutor</li> </ul>
Independent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use computer-assisted instruction and your textbook's online resources</li> <li>• purchase review workbooks or study guides, if available</li> </ul>

*(Continued)*



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**TABLE 1** Learning Styles and Reading/Learning Strategies

If your learning style is . . .	Then the reading/learning strategies to use are . . .
Creative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ask and answer questions</li><li>• record your own ideas in margins of textbooks</li></ul>
Pragmatic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• study in an organized environment</li><li>• write lists of steps, procedures, and processes</li></ul>

To use Table 1, do the following:

1. Circle the five aspects of your learning style in which you received the highest scores. Disregard the others.
2. Read through the suggestions that apply to you.
3. Place a check mark in front of suggestions that you think will work for you. Choose at least one from each category.
4. List the suggestions that you chose in the box labeled Action Plan for Learning below.

In the Action Plan for Learning you listed five or more suggestions to help you learn what you read. The next step is to experiment with these techniques,

Action Plan for Learning
Learning Strategy 1 _____ _____
Learning Strategy 2 _____ _____
Learning Strategy 3 _____ _____
Learning Strategy 4 _____ _____
Learning Strategy 5 _____ _____
Learning Strategy 6 _____ _____

one at a time. Use one technique for a while, and then move to the next. Continue using the techniques that seem to work; work on revising or modifying those that do not. Do not hesitate to experiment with other techniques listed in the table as well. You may find other techniques that work well for you.

### Developing Strategies to Overcome Limitations

You should also work on developing styles in which you are weak. Your learning style is not fixed or unchanging. You can improve areas in which you scored lower. Although you may be weak in auditory learning, for example, many of your professors will lecture and expect you to take notes. If you work on improving your listening and note-taking skills, you can learn to handle lectures effectively. Make a conscious effort to work on improving areas of weakness as well as taking advantage of your strengths.

#### EXERCISE 4 Evaluating Learning Strategies

**Directions:** Write a brief evaluation of each learning strategy you listed in your Action Plan for Learning. Explain which worked; which, if any, did not; and what changes you have noticed in your ability to learn from reading.

#### EXERCISE 5 Learning Styles I



**Directions:** Form several small groups (three to five students), each of which consists of people who are either predominantly visual learners or predominantly auditory learners. Each group should discuss and outline strategies for completing each of the following tasks:

- Task 1: reading a poem for a literature class
- Task 2: revising an essay for a writing class
- Task 3: reviewing an economics textbook chapter that contains numerous tables, charts, and graphs

Groups should report their findings to the class and discuss how visual and auditory learners' strategies differ.

#### EXERCISE 6 Learning Styles II



**Directions:** Form several small groups (three to five students), each of which consists of people who are either predominantly social learners or predominantly independent learners. Each group should discuss and outline strategies for completing each of the following tasks:

- Task 1: reading a sociology textbook chapter that contains end-of-chapter study and review questions



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- Task 2: working on sample problems for a math class
- Task 3: reading a case study (a detailed description of a criminal case) for a criminal justice class

Groups should report their findings to the class and discuss how social and independent learners' strategies differ.

## IMPROVE YOUR COMPREHENSION

### 4 LEARNING GOAL

Improve your comprehension

Understanding what you read is the key to success in most college courses. Use the following sections to assess when you are and are not understanding what you read and to take action when you find your comprehension is weak or incomplete.

### Paying Attention to Comprehension Signals

Think for a moment about how you feel when you read material you can easily understand. Now compare that with what happens when you read something difficult and complicated. When you read easy material, does it seem that everything “clicks”? That is, do ideas seem to fit together and make sense? Is that “click” noticeably absent in difficult reading?

Read each of the following paragraphs. As you read, be aware of how well you understand each of them.

#### Paragraph 1

“Hooking up” is a term used to describe casual sexual activity with no strings attached between heterosexual college students who are strangers or brief acquaintances. When did people start to hook up? Although the term became common in the 1990s, its use with its modern meaning has been documented as early as the mid-1980s. Studies from the early 2000s show that hooking up was already a fairly common practice on U.S. campuses, practiced by as much as 40 percent of female college students. More recent studies have shed some light on the demographic and psychological correlatives of hooking up. In a 2007 study involving 832 college students, it emerged that hooking up is practiced less by African-American than Caucasian students. Hooking up is also associated with the use of alcohol and, interestingly, with higher parental income. Increased financial resources may give teens and young adults more opportunities to socialize and hook up.

—Kunz, *THINK Marriages and Families*, p. 83

#### Paragraph 2

Diluted earnings per share (EPS) are calculated under the assumption that all contingent securities that would have dilutive effects are converted and exercised and are therefore common stock. They are found by adjusting basic EPS for the impact of converting all convertibles and exercising all warrants and options that



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would have dilutive effects on the firm's earnings. This approach treats as common stock all contingent securities. It is calculated by dividing earnings available for common stockholders (adjusted for interest and preferred stock dividends that would not be paid, given assumed conversion of all outstanding contingent securities that would have dilutive effects) by the number of shares of common stock that would be outstanding if all contingent securities that would have dilutive effects were converted and exercised.

—Gitman, *Principles of Managerial Finance*, p. 733

Did you feel comfortable and confident as you read Paragraph 1? Did ideas seem to lead from one to another and make sense? How did you feel while reading Paragraph 2? Most likely you sensed its difficulty and felt confused. Some words were unfamiliar, and you could not follow the flow of ideas.

As you read Paragraph 2, did you know that you were not understanding it? Did you feel lost and confused? Table 2 lists and compares some common signals that are useful in monitoring your comprehension. Not all signals

Positive Signals	Negative Signals
Everything seems to fit and make sense; ideas flow logically from one to another.	Some pieces do not seem to belong; the ideas do not fit together or make sense.
You are able to understand what the author is saying.	You feel as if you are struggling to stay with the author.
You can see where the author is leading.	You cannot think ahead or predict what will come next.
You are able to make connections among ideas.	You are unable to see how ideas connect.
You read at a regular, comfortable pace.	You often slow down or lose your place.
You understand why the material was assigned.	You do not know why the material was assigned and cannot explain why it is important.
You can understand the material after reading it once.	You need to reread sentences or paragraphs frequently.
You recognize most words or can figure them out from context.	Many words are unfamiliar.
You can express the key ideas in your own words.	You must reread and use the author's language to explain an idea.
You feel comfortable with the topic; you have some background knowledge.	The topic is unfamiliar; you know nothing about it.



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appear at the same time, and not all signals work for everyone. As you study the list, identify those positive signals you sensed as you read Paragraph 1 on hooking up. Then identify those negative signals that you sensed when reading about diluted earnings per share.

Once you are able to recognize negative signals while reading, the next step is to take action to correct the problem. Specific techniques are given in the section “Working on Strengthening Your Comprehension.”

### EXERCISE 7 **Monitoring Your Comprehension**

**Directions:** Read the following excerpt from a geography textbook about environmental disturbance and disease. It is intended to be difficult, so do not be discouraged. As you read, monitor your comprehension. After reading, answer the questions that follow.

Human alteration of the environment can create breeding grounds for new viruses and increase the number of pathways viruses can take to new populations. As new human settlements put pressure on surrounding habitats, humans come into contact with unfamiliar species that may carry disease capable of jumping to human hosts. Settlers who clear forests often reduce the natural food sources used by forest mammals, which invade the new houses looking to eat. An outbreak of hantavirus occurred in the United States in 1993, when hungry rodents, driven into human settlements by rising waters, left droppings in Arizona kitchens. “Manmade malaria” occurs frequently around irrigation systems that contain large pools of standing water in open fields—ideal mosquito breeding grounds. Even simple deforestation at the edge of a city removes the canopy that normally reduces mosquito activity while leaving behind pock-marked land that fills with water. Dengue fever and Japanese encephalitis also spread through irrigation practices in mosquito habitats. Confined animal breeding, such as pig farms and poultry pens, is under intense scrutiny as the possible cauldron of recent viral outbreaks, including SARS and H1N1. Travel, of course, effectively introduces viruses and fresh hosts who may lack the locals’ resistance, shuttling disease around the world. One of the worst scenarios for public health is a highly contagious infection entering the global air transportation network. Humans no longer benefit from relative isolation and the disease barrier of distance.

Large-scale environmental alteration is likely to change the opportunities for old and new diseases to appear. Climate change is increasing the portion of Earth that is hospitable to disease-carrying insects. Mosquitoes are already appearing at previously cooler higher latitudes and higher elevations. These changes may produce more infectious disease such as diarrhea. Climate change may also affect crop production leading to malnutrition, a health problem by itself, which also limits humans’ ability to fight off infections. Heart and respiratory diseases

## Reading and Learning: Getting Started



may increase due to increased ground-level ozone. Human environmental alteration may, on the other hand, eliminate a pathogen's habitat, eradicate the pathogen, and prevent future epidemics. For example, the completion of Egypt's Aswan Dam in 1971 destroyed the floodwater habitat of the *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes, carriers of Rift Valley fever virus. By 1980, Rift Valley fever had virtually disappeared from Egypt, although the dam provided an aquatic environment that spread Schistosomiasis.

Because environmental changes are highly localized in their effects, it is impossible to make accurate predictions about what will happen where. Some regions may experience relative relief from some disease burdens but many regions will experience a shift to new, unfamiliar, disease. Vulnerable populations, especially those with weak health systems, will have a difficult time coping with these unanticipated changes.

—Dahlman, Renwick, and Bergman, *Introduction to Geography*, p. 175

1. How would you rate your overall comprehension? What positive signals did you sense? Did you feel any negative signals? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Test the accuracy of your rating in Question 1 by answering the following questions based on the material read.
  - a. Explain how changing human settlements can cause disease. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - b. How does travel increase disease? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - c. In what ways does climate affect disease? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Describe how changes to the environment caused by humans can reduce disease. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. In which sections was your comprehension strongest? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Did you feel at any time that you had lost, or were about to lose, comprehension? If so, go back to that paragraph now. What made that paragraph difficult to read?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Underline any difficult words that interfered with your comprehension.  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Working on Strengthening Your Comprehension

When you realize your comprehension is not as strong as needed, be sure to approach the reading task positively and take action right away.

### Positive Approaches to Reading

1. **Stick with a reading assignment.** If an assignment is troublesome, experiment with different methods of completing it. Consider highlighting, outlining, testing yourself, preparing vocabulary cards, or drawing diagrams, for example.
2. **Plan on spending time.** Reading is not something you can rush through. The time you invest will pay off in increased comprehension.

**TABLE 3** How to Improve Your Comprehension

Problems	Strategies
Your concentration is poor.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Take limited breaks.</li> <li>2. Tackle difficult material when your mind is fresh and alert.</li> <li>3. Choose an appropriate place to study.</li> <li>4. Focus your attention.</li> </ol>
Words are difficult or unfamiliar.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use context and analyze word parts.</li> <li>2. Skim through material before reading. Mark and look up meanings of difficult words. Jot meanings in the margin.</li> <li>3. Refer to the vocabulary preview list, footnotes, or glossary.</li> </ol>
Sentences are long or confusing.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read aloud.</li> <li>2. Locate the key idea(s).</li> <li>3. Check difficult words.</li> <li>4. Express each sentence in your own words.</li> </ol>
Ideas are hard to understand, complicated.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Rephrase or explain each in your own words.</li> <li>2. Make notes.</li> <li>3. Locate a more basic text that explains ideas in simpler form.</li> <li>4. Study with a classmate; discuss difficult ideas.</li> </ol>
Ideas are new and unfamiliar; you have little or no knowledge about the topic, and the writer assumes you do.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Make sure you didn't miss or skip introductory information.</li> <li>2. Get background information by referring to               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. an earlier section or chapter in the book.</li> <li>b. an encyclopedia.</li> <li>c. a more basic text.</li> <li>d. a reliable online resource</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
The material seems disorganized or poorly organized.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pay more attention to headings.</li> <li>2. Read the summary, if available.</li> <li>3. Try to discover organization by writing an outline or drawing a map as you read.</li> </ol>
You do not know what is and is not important.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Preview.</li> <li>2. Ask and answer guide questions.</li> <li>3. Locate and underline topic sentences.</li> </ol>



3. **Actively search for key ideas as you read.** Try to connect these ideas with what your instructor is discussing in class. Think of reading as a way of sifting and sorting out what you need to learn from the less important information.
4. **Think of reading as a way of unlocking the writer's message to you, the reader.** Look for clues about the writer's personality, attitudes, opinions, and beliefs. This will put you in touch with the writer as a person and help you understand his or her message.

**Overcoming Incomplete Comprehension** At times, you will realize that your comprehension is poor or incomplete. When this occurs, take immediate action. Identify as specifically as possible the cause of the problem. Do this by answering the question “Why is this not making sense?” Determine whether it is difficult words, complex ideas, organization, or your lack of concentration that is bothering you. Next, make changes in your reading to correct or compensate for the problem. Table 3 on the previous page lists common problems and offers strategies to correct them.

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**EXERCISE 8 Monitoring Your Comprehension**

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**Directions:** Read each of the following difficult paragraphs, monitoring your comprehension as you do so. After reading each passage, identify and describe any problems you experienced. Then indicate what strategies you would use to correct them.

A. How are motives identified? How are they measured? How do researchers know which motives are responsible for certain kinds of behavior? These are difficult questions to answer because motives are hypothetical constructs—that is, they cannot be seen or touched, handled, smelled, or otherwise tangibly observed. For this reason, no single measurement method can be considered a reliable index. Instead, researchers usually rely on a combination of research techniques to try to establish the presence and/or the strength of various motives. By combining a variety of research methods—including responses to questionnaires or surveys' data (i.e., self-reports of opinions and behaviors), and insights from focus group sessions and in-depth interviews (i.e., to discover underlying motives)—consumer researchers achieve more valid insights into consumer motivations than they would by using any one technique alone.

—Schiffman, Kanuk, and Wisenblit, *Consumer Behavior*, p. 106

Problem: \_\_\_\_\_

Strategies: \_\_\_\_\_



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B. According to the **biological species concept**, a species is defined as a group of individuals that, in nature, can interbreed and produce fertile offspring but cannot reproduce with members of other species. In practice, this definition can be difficult to apply. For example, species that reproduce asexually (such as most bacteria) and species known only via fossils do not easily fit into this species concept. However, the biological species concept does help us understand why species are distinct from each other.

—Belk and Maier, *Biology*, p. 277

Problem: \_\_\_\_\_

Strategies: \_\_\_\_\_

C. A surprising use for elastomers is in paints and other coatings. The substance in a paint that hardens to form a continuous surface coating, often called the *binder*, or resin, is a polymer, usually an elastomer. Paint made with elastomers is resistant to cracking. Various kinds of polymers can be used as binders, depending on the specific qualities desired in the paint. Latex paints, which have polymer particles dispersed in water, and thus avoiding the use of organic solvents, are most common. Brushes and rollers are easily cleaned in soap and water. This replacement of the hazardous organic solvents historically used in paints with water is a good example of green chemistry.

—Hill, McCreary, and Kolb, *Chemistry for Changing Times*, p. 278

Problem: \_\_\_\_\_

Strategies: \_\_\_\_\_

### LEARNING STYLE TIPS

If you are a(n) . . .	Then improve your comprehension by . . .
Auditory learner	Reading aloud
Visual learner	Visualizing paragraph organization
Applied learner	Thinking of real-life situations that illustrate ideas in the passage
Conceptual learner	Asking questions

**EXERCISE 9 Analyzing Difficult Readings**



**Directions:** Bring to class a difficult paragraph or brief excerpt. Working in groups, each student should read each piece, and then, together, members should (1) discuss why each piece was difficult and (2) compare the negative and positive signals they received while reading them (refer to Table 2). Each student should then select strategies to overcome the difficulties he or she experienced.

**READ AND THINK VISUALLY**

**5 LEARNING GOAL**  
Read and think visually

Visuals are important in today's world, since Web sites, textbooks, television, and even academic journals contain more graphics than ever before. Visuals include graphics (such as charts, maps, and graphs) and photographs, as well as text that is made more visually appealing by using color, symbols, and design. You will see visuals in this chapter and in most full-length readings.

**The Importance of Visuals**

Authors use visuals because they can convey a lot of information in a small amount of space. Visuals are important for you because they are time-savers, allowing you to grasp main ideas, implied main ideas, and details very quickly. Because your brain stores visuals differently, they may be easier to retrieve, as well.

**Reading and Analyzing Visuals**

When reading any type of visual, be sure to do the following:

- **Read the title or caption.** Often the caption or title identifies its subject.
- **Read any accompanying text.** The corresponding text often explains what the author wants the reader to notice.
- **Identify its main point.** What is the visual trying to explain, show, or illustrate?
- **Identify its purpose.** Determine why it was included.

**EXERCISE 10 Examining a Visual**

**Directions:** Look at the graphic from a sociology book on the next page, and answer the following questions:

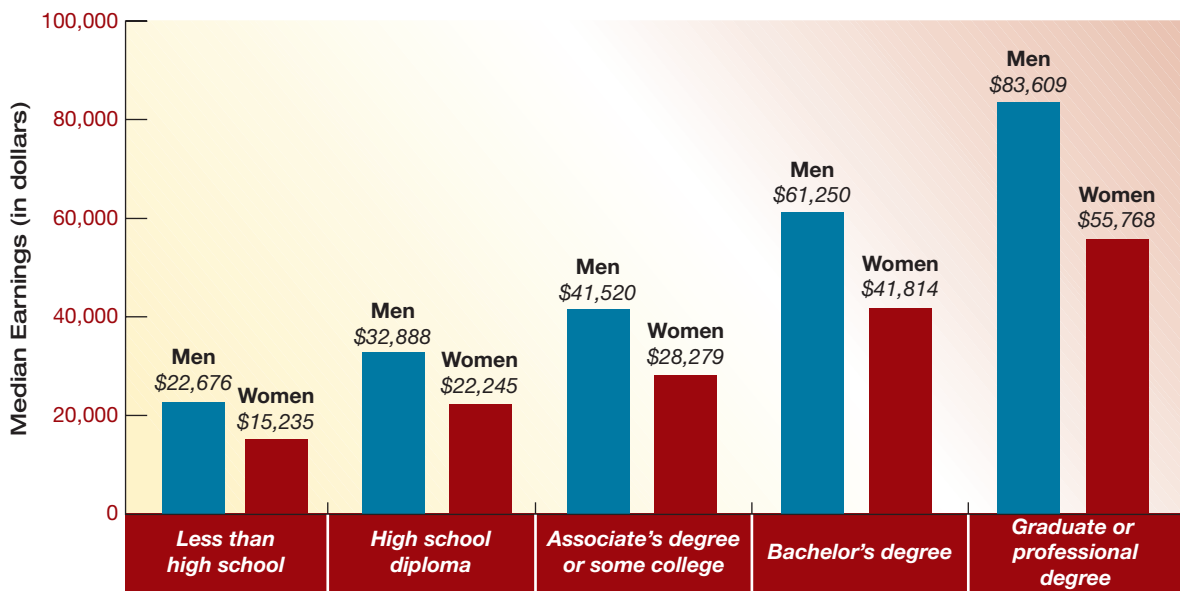
1. What is the first thing you notice when you see this visual?
2. Without reading a single word in the graphic, what do you think it is going to be about?



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3. By looking at the graphic, what do you think the textbook chapter in which it was included is about?
4. Carefully examine the graphic. About how many facts do you think are contained in this graphic? Is it more effective to see all of this information in a visual form than to read a long paragraph or textbook section listing all of these facts? Why or why not?
5. This graphic allows you to make numerous comparisons. List as many as you can find.

### The Gender Income Gap by Level of Education in 2013



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009–2013 5-Year American Community Survey

## USE WRITING TO LEARN

### 6 LEARNING GOAL Use writing to learn

Do you read with a pen or pencil in hand? Do you write notes in the margin of your textbook and take notes while your instructors lecture? If so, you have already discovered that writing is one of the best ways to learn. Taking notes as you read makes the process more active. The act of writing out key points and important vocabulary helps cement the information in your brain. It also develops your writing skills, which are valuable in all careers.

### Working with Writing Exercises and Assignments

Some students don't like to write because they feel their command of grammar and spelling is not perfect. But grammar is easily learned, and reference



tools (such as dictionaries) can help you check your spelling. If you are using a computer program such as Word to write, you can use the program's spell-check and grammar-check features to help you analyze your mistakes and correct them.

Remember that good writing is as much about *ideas* as it is about grammar. Writing exercises and assignments are designed to help you work with information and think deeply about the material.

The following tips can help you approach writing exercises and assignments in the right frame of mind:

### Tips for Doing Well on Writing Assignments

1. **Do the reading before working on the writing assignment.** Do not attempt to answer questions until you have completed the reading assignment!
2. **Take notes while reading.** Underline key points and take notes in the margin. Doing so will help you focus on the reading and retain the information.
3. **Read the writing assignment carefully.** Most writing assignments or questions ask for specific information. If you read the question too quickly, you may not provide the correct answer.
4. **Answer the question with specific information and examples.** The key to good writing is making a point and then supporting it with examples.
5. **Determine the correct length of the answer/response.** Students sometimes write everything they know instead of just the answer to the question. Not all answers require a paragraph or essay; sometimes one sentence is enough.
6. **In writing assignments, “Yes” or “No” is not a complete answer.** Some writing exercises will ask you a “yes or no” or “agree or disagree” question. It is important to include the *reasons* for your answer because the assignment is really asking you how you arrived at your opinion.
7. **Write complete sentences.** On most writing assignments and essay exams, it is important to write in complete sentences. Examine the question to determine when it is acceptable to provide a briefer answer. For example, fill-in-the-blank questions usually require you to write only key words or phrases, not whole sentences.