

Pre-Reading Strategies: PBID

IMAGINE SUBA DIVING WITHOUT THE PROTECTIVE GEAR of wet suit, mask, and oxygen and just plunging in and hoping for the best. Or running a marathon without first stretching and warming up. Demanding physical activities require preparing the body to meet the challenge. Similarly, demanding mental activities require preparing the mind to meet the challenge. Text book and other types of academic reading are demanding mental activities. Yet, many students do not prepare themselves for these reading tasks. They just "dive in" to a 30 page biology chapter or 10 page political science essay, starting from the first page and hoping to make it through to the end without falling asleep.

To successfully read and, most importantly, comprehend text books or other types of required reading material, students need to develop a plan for how they will accomplish this. Using the PBID strategy as a "warm up" technique, students can significantly improve their ability to comprehend what they are reading.

Before you begin to read, you need to check your PBID!



PURPOSE

Students often sit down to read with only the vague thought that they have to "study" this chapter and will hopefully retain "something." You would benefit from taking a minute to identify the purpose of the reading. Why are you reading that textbook? What do you hope to gain from this reading session? Some common reasons that you need to read a text are:

- Read the chapter for background information so that you will understand the next class lecture.
- Read the chapter for information so that you will understand the lecture that you already heard and can add information to class notes.
- Read the chapter and memorize details, such as definitions of types of rocks in geology or the time sequence of events that led up to the Civil War.
- Read the chapter and be able to discuss causes and effects of different issues such as the cause of the Civil War and the effect it had on the politics of the South.
- Read a science text to understand scientific principles and processes such as Mendel's Law of Genetics or Newton's Three Laws of Motion.

Your purpose for reading often goes hand in hand with the type of testing in the class and the type of homework or papers that you have to complete.

BACKGROUND

Your reading comprehension is strongly affected by your background knowledge. What do you already know about the subject? Skim the chapter headings, pictures, charts, graphs, and diagrams. Read the summary, and think about what you know about this subject.

If you have high knowledge of the subject, then it may be easier for you to read the material. You will be able to meet your purpose quicker than if the information is totally new to you. If your knowledge of the subject is low, then you will have to build up your knowledge base. Sometimes an instructor will help by giving a lecture that is intended to build students' backgrounds before they attempt the textbook reading. Often you will be expected to do this on your own. Time management becomes a factor, as you may have to reread your text several times to build up enough knowledge so that you can organize and comprehend the information. Discussing new information with other students in a study group will also enhance your knowledge base and help you think about the information in new ways.

INTEREST

Students often complain that they don't like to read the text because it is not interesting. In many cases this is a true statement. However, in many classes if you do not read the text, you will not pass the class. If you avoid the text because of lack of interest, you need to take some action to make the reading bearable.

- Create interest by sharing the reading with study partners. Divide up the chapter, make each student responsible for reading and teaching the concepts from their section to the other members of the group. Be aware that the part of the chapter you learn the best will be the part that you teach.
- Do something with the information as you read the text. Write notes or lists in the margins. Create a picture in your mind of the information. Write an outline or try a nonlinear approach such as a mind map.
- Break the reading into small time units. Concentrate on the reading for twenty minutes, then take a small break, then twenty minutes more of focused reading.
- Reward yourself for reading and studying material that is not interesting to you.
- Talk to the instructor and ask questions about the subject matter. Ask him/her how to read and comprehend the text. The instructor may say something to spark your interest.
- Create questions before you read, pretend they are real test questions, and you must know the answers to pass the class.

DIFFICULTY

The difficulty of the reading material can encourage or discourage a student from studying the text. Sometimes the format of the text is more difficult than the actual course material. You have little control over the choice of the text, but you do have options if the reading is difficult.

- Read another text that is on the same subject, but is written on a similar level. You can check out textbooks at the Merrill Cazier Library or at the Curriculum Library in the Education Building.
- Go back and think about your purpose, background, and interest. One of these factors may be making the reading difficult. Adjust as necessary using the strategies previously described.
- Get a tutor for the class so that the difficult parts can be explained to help you understand the information.
- Attend SI sessions.