Most of us have to read a certain amount of material or one reason or another: perhaps we are taking a course, perhaps we need to read something for work, perhaps we are giving a talk on an outside interest to a group or club. All too often we approach such an **assignment** with the idea of reading a certain number of pages, or starting at the beginning and reading page by page until we have completed the reading. While this approach does get the reading over with, it does not encourage you to think about what you are reading – to participate actively.

People who enjoy reading have learned to look for clues or key ideas as they read. They often do this without realizing it, but it is part of what makes reading fun. If you have never tried this technique, you want to see how it works. In some ways it’s like taking a trip someplace you’ve never been. You wouldn’t just start off and hope you are going in the right direction; you would probably check a roadmap carefully to see the direction you want to go, the types of roads, the location of towns or other special points. It’s the same with reading. If you have some idea of what is included in the material and how it is presented, you will get more out of your reading and enjoy it more. You can do this by looking over the reading briefly in a **methodical** way to see the main points of the chapter or article.

First, read the opening **paragraph** or two. This introductory material will acquaint you with the main thought that the author will discuss. Then read the first sentences of the next few paragraphs. These sentences will generally give you a general idea of the content. Then read the final paragraph or two, which will give you a summary of the material covered. You should note anything the author has used to add emphasis: **headings**, **bold-face type, italics, graphs**, pictures, and questions at the end of the chapter. This **preview** of your reading should be done very quickly.

Second, re-read the whole assignment more thoroughly. The speed and emphasis of this second reading will depend on the information and direction you gained from your preview of the material. For example, you will often be able to judge the importance of a paragraph by its first, or **topic, sentence**. If it seems important, read it carefully. If not, on the basis of your first reading, the paragraph does not deem important, it is probably sufficient to **SKIM** it, but do not skip it entirely.

You will need to adapt your approach to fit the writing style of the author. In some books various sections have topics in bold-Face type or set out in the margins. Use these as guides to the content. Questions at the end of the chapter can give you an idea of what is contained in that chapter.

As you read, try to relate this assignment to what you already know about the topic. Is it new material? Does it differ from your earlier thinking on the subject? Ask yourself three simple questions as you move along: why? what? who? when? where? how? This approach can help you concentrate on the assignment because as you ask questions, you are taking an active role as a reader.

With such a systematic approach you will be able to direct your attention and concentration toward understanding the material more completely. The better your initial understanding of the reading, the easier it will be to retain and **integrate** the information. You will not be wasting your time; you will be making more efficient use of the time you have. You may also find that reading has become more fun than work!

Vocabulary

1. assignment: work given
2. methodical: using an ordered system
3. paragraph: division of a writing or a printed piece which deals with one central idea, and is made up of one or more sentences: the first world of the paragraph often begins a few spaces further to the right than the remaining material
4. headings: the words written as a title at the top of a piece of writing or at the top of each part of it
5. bold-face type: thick black letters
6. italics: a style of printing with sloping letters
7. graphs: drawings that show how values are related to one another
8. preview: looking over quickly before beginning to read thoroughly
9. topic sentence: sentence containing the main idea
10. skim: look over quickly for the main ideas
11. integrate: join together so as to form a whole

Organization Exercise

Put the following statements in the order of the article.

1. Systematic reading will help you improve comprehension.
2. When you read, it helps if you know what is included and how it is presented.
3. Try to make connections between what you are reading and what you already know.
4. Judging by the topic sentence, decide whether you should read a paragraph slowly.
5. Reading an article straight through is not the most effective method of reading.
6. You approach to reading your assignment will need to be adapted to fit the format of the article.
7. First preview your assignment quickly.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Comprehension and Combination Exercise: Choose three (3) correct statements in each group and combine them into one sentence, as in the following example.

When you have to read a certain amount of material,

1. you can read the assignment straight through
2. this is an effective method of reading
3. this is not the most effective method of reading
4. it does not encourage you to read actively
5. it allows you to enjoy your reading

Combining (a), (c), and (d) gives this sentence:

When you have to read a certain amount of material, you can read the assignment straight through, but this is not the most effective method of reading because it does not encourage you to read actively.

1. In previewing your assignment,
2. read the first couple of paragraphs
3. read the last sentence of each paragraph
4. read the last few paragraphs
5. pay attention to headings, bold type, italics, graphs, pictures, etc.
6. skip any part which is boring
7. spend as much time as you want previewing

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1. In the second reading,
2. read the assignment more thoroughly
3. read important paragraphs carefully
4. judge how important each Paragraph is from its length
5. skip any paragraphs whose topic sentences do not seems important
6. read as fast as you can

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1. When you read,
2. you need to know the writing style of the author
3. try to connect what you are reading with what you already know
4. do not read systemically
5. take an active role, asking questions such as why, what, where, when, and how
6. ask your teacher questions
7. you waste your time if you use the systemic approach

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Comprehension Questions

1. How can you get an idea of what is included in the material and how it is arranged?
2. In previewing a new article, which paragraphs do you read carefully?
3. How fast should you preview an article?
4. In the second reading, which sentences do you pay attention to?
5. Which paragraphs do you skim rapidly?

Vocabulary Exercises

1. For each of these words find the part of speech asked for:
2. approach -noun \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. assignment -verb \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. completed -noun \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. encourage -noun \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. participate -noun \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. methodical -noun \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
8. introductory -noun \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
9. acquaint -noun \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
10. summary -verb \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
11. quickly -adjective \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
12. entirely -noun \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
13. adapt -noun \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
14. need -noun \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
15. contained -noun \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
16. relate -noun \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
17. differ -adjective \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
18. concentrate -noun \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
19. attention -adjective \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
20. retain -noun \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
21. integrate -noun \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
22. What are the antonyms to these words?
23. Actively \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
24. Author \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
25. Gained \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
26. Earlier \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
27. Simple \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
28. Initial \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
29. Efficient \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
30. Fill in the blank with a form of a word from the main text.
31. Our English teacher gives us a lot of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
32. You should not just sit in class and listen to your classmates. You active \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in the class is required.
33. We explored the area to find a suitable \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for our camp.
34. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ reading of homework assignments will improve your reading comprehension.
35. The last \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ will give you a summary of the whole article.
36. The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ *of The Old Man and the Sea* is Ernest Hemingway.
37. If you read the summary before reading an article, you will have an idea of what the article is about.
38. When you go to a movie theater, you see a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the next movie.
39. A \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ investigation will show that the man was murdered.
40. We have to adapt ourselves to our environment.
41. If necessary, you may write in the margins of your textbook.
42. What does this bottle \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?
43. The grade you receive in a class is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to hard and how often you study.
44. I cannot \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ on just one thing because I am interested in so many things.
45. Although he is very old, he still \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ a lot of vitality.
46. When you read, try to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ what you are reading with what you already know.
47. Our teacher has adopted \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ methods of teaching.

Summary Exercise

1. What is the main thought the author discusses in this article? (read the first 2 paragraphs)
2. Pick out topic sentences ibn the 3rd, 5th, and 6th paragraphs and write them here.
3. Write a summary of this article. (read the last paragraph)