

## Unit 9

### Strategies for Reading Actively

# **STRATEGIES FOR READING ACTIVELY**

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As mentioned earlier, reading is an active process. You cannot simply accumulate bits and bytes of information or just passively accept what you read. You must be an **active participant** who has an important interpretative role in the reading process. Keep in mind, the act of reading is a push and pull between readers and text. As a reader, therefore, you must actively make, or construct meaning of the text as a whole. To achieve the purpose, here are some important strategies that can be of help to you: previewing the reading, activating prior knowledge, annotating, and keeping a journal.

## Previewing the Reading

To preview the reading is like making an outline before writing an essay. It helps you get focused, save time, and anticipate the content before you get started. To do so, ask yourself questions such as:

- ↳ What do the title, headings, and subheadings tell me about the content?
- ↳ What does the opening sentence of each paragraph tell me about the content?
- ↳ What is my purpose in reading?
- ↳ What do I expect to learn from reading?

The last two questions, concerning a personal purpose for reading, help you focus your attention only on specific aspects of a reading text. Without setting goals, everything in the selection may be equally important and you may need to learn it all in complete detail. This, as a result, may lead to information overload.

## Activating Prior Knowledge

In the process of reading, you need to be an active participant by connecting what you are reading with your own background knowledge and personal experiences. To help activate prior knowledge, before you begin to read, ask yourself these questions:

- ↳ What do I already know about this subject?
- ↳ What have I experienced in this area?
- ↳ What opinions, thoughts, or beliefs do I have about this subject?

These questions will help you make connections between the information that is already in your head and the new information that is coming. Stimulating recall of prior knowledge will allow you to approach a piece of writing with more ways to create comprehension than if you start reading with a blank mind.

### Practice 1: Pre-reading Strategies

Study the questions below to get some idea *before* reading the selection that follows.

1. What can the title tell you about the text?

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2. What does the first sentence of each paragraph tell you about the content?

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3. What do you hope to learn from this reading?

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4. What do you already know about the topic of the text?

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5. What is your idea about this topic?

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### Alaska: Animals Everywhere

'Animals are everywhere in Alaska. If you go out to the wild areas, you can see a lot of wild animals. Some large animals, like the caribou, live in groups, and you can see hundreds of them. You can also see other large animals, such as moose and deer. There are also bears and wolves, of course. But these animals are not really dangerous. If you stay away from them, they will stay away from you. They usually are afraid of people.



'Sometimes the wild animals come to areas with people. You may see deer or moose, for example, in someone's backyard. This makes the children and the tourists happy, but it's a problem for Alaskan gardeners! These animals like to eat the plants in gardens, and they walk all over the grass and flowers.

'Lots of people in Alaska have animals at home, too. Dogs are the favorites, especially huskies. The Eskimos used these dogs to pull sleds in the winter. Many Alaskans now keep huskies and go dog-sledding as a sport. There are competitions for the most beautiful dogs and the strongest dogs. Of course, there are dog-sled races, too.

(Mikulecky & Jeffries, 1998, p. 195)

### Annotating



Annotating a reading passage is a way to identify and summarize key information. It also is a way to record your reaction when you read. Annotating can be done by:

- ↳ Circling unfamiliar words.
- ↳ Connecting ideas with arrows.
- ↳ Underlining or marking some significant sentences or paragraphs and rephrasing them.
- ↳ Writing questions or comments in the margin-left or right.
- ↳ Using your own words to make brief notes in the margin.
- ↳ Noting places where you feel further information is needed.

Annotating a text is beneficial for three reasons. One is to help you actively interact with the text you read. It also helps you monitor your comprehension, and it helps mark significant information so that you can easily come back to it later on. This is like keeping a record for future review.

Here is a sample of how you can annotate a reading selection.

### What Do Today's Employers Want from Job Applications?

*read to find out specific skills or attitudes employers want from me*

This article is by Kenneth G. Heinemann, director of Heald Institute of Technology, San Jose, California. Heald Colleges operate technical schools in seven U.S. cities and business schools in a dozen cities. This selection is excerpted from his March, 1996 article for the T.H.E. Journal.

<sup>1</sup>The simple answer is this: employers want individuals who are trained in the skills of the job.

<sup>2</sup>In the past, knowing the basic skill of the workplace was enough. Secretaries were expected to type. Repair people repaired. Electricians wired. But, increasingly, people with one-dimensional skills are not getting the better jobs. In fact, according to former N.Y. Governor Mario Cuomo,

*that much?* — 61 percent of America's workers do not have the skills for today's jobs.

*need definition* — <sup>3</sup>This is especially true wherever technology is concerned. High-tech employers do not want prima donnas, no matter how skilled; the days of a soloist soldering a circuit board in a cubicle are long gone; and the near-genius who knows his electronics equations but can't tell others what they mean or how to apply them may have a difficult time finding employment.

### Need for People Skills

<sup>4</sup>In the field of electronics and computer technology, the focus is on teamwork and communication. Employers still expect job applicants to understand the fundamentals of electronics, from which specific on-the-job training can follow.

*- must work well in groups  
- must understand the job  
- must speak and write well*

<sup>5</sup>But almost of equal importance, employers expect the new field service technician, computer repair person or test technician to work well in groups and understand the necessity of telling co-workers about the status of

projects verbally and in writing. It goes with the territory these days that the job applicant—particularly the one applying for a job in technology—knows what the job entails, and knows how to *talk* about and often *write* about the job.

<sup>6</sup>Further, the classic dividing lines between blue collar workers and white collar executives are fading fast. Today's high-tech line employers must often look as successful as the boss, project and image of professionalism by dress and language, and still be able to handle the technical requirements of his or her job.

*must have good 'people skills'—work and get along with others*

<sup>7</sup>"We're looking for people with good 'people skills,'" says John Tebbets, one of some 17 staffing specialists with Entex Information Services of Ryebrook, N.Y. "I can often tell within a few minutes if an applicant has what we want. Entex expects prospective employees to dress professionally. What I see is what our customers see. First impressions really count. And, "of course we expect applicants to have the job skills that are necessary," says Tebbets.

*must have job skills*

### **Good Grades and Attitude**

<sup>8</sup>Of course, good "people skills" alone can't take the place of solid electronics training proven by good grades.

*good grades help because they show mastery of job basics*

<sup>9</sup>Kimberly Senise, a Human Resources representative with KLA Instruments, tell us that she looks first at a prospect's grade point average. "If I see a 3.5 to 3.8, then I'm definitely interested. But I'll consider a prospect with lower grades if that person has had work experience. *Any* work tells me the applicant has a measure of dedication and discipline. If the work has been in some aspect of technology, all the better."

*demonstrate you have researched and thought about company and job*

<sup>10</sup>Like many employers we see, Senise wants an applicant who can think and who has thought about the job he or she is applying for. "I want to know if the prospective employee has a goal, has a sense of where he or she is going, whether that person is a 'worker bee' type or someone who aspires to become a leader."

<sup>11</sup>What about teamwork? "Absolutely essential," says Senise. "During the interview process I'm listening carefully to see how the applicant describes school project: is it 'I did this' or 'We did this'? Finally it's

*teamwork is really important*

important that the applicant show some genuine enthusiasm," she says "I want to get a feeling that the person has thought about the interview, has selected KLA for good reasons, is eager to work in almost any capacity and at any time."

### Final Words

<sup>12</sup>What do employers want from today's job applicant? Everything they've wanted before...and a whole lot more.

*be willing  
to be a  
productive  
team member* <sup>13</sup>Employers are more sophisticated and customers are more demanding. It's critical that the person who wants a rewarding career—especially in technology—be ready to extend him or herself, reach out beyond their basic skill or interest area, communicate effectively and work smoothly and efficiently with others.

(Adapted from McGrath, 1999, pp. 13-15)

### Practice 2: Annotation

Use the guidelines in the preceding section to annotate the passage below.

#### A Belief that I Feel Strongly About

<sup>1</sup>I used to think that we should always try everything in our power to keep a person alive. But now I strongly believe that a person has a right to die in peace and with dignity. The reason why I believe this now is because of my father's illness and death.

<sup>2</sup>It all started on Christmas Day, December 25, when my father was admitted to the hospital. The doctors diagnosed his condition as a heart attack. Following this episode, he was readmitted and discharged from several different hospitals. On June 18, he was hospitalized for what was initially thought to be pneumonia but which turned out to be lung cancer. He began chemotherapy treatments. When complications occurred, he had to be placed on a respirator. At first he couldn't speak or eat. But then they operated on him and placed the tube from the machine in his throat



instead of his mouth. He was then able to eat and move his mouth. He underwent radiation therapy when they discovered he had three tumors in his head and that the cancer had spread all over his body. We had to sign a paper which asked us to indicate, if he should stop breathing, whether we would want the hospital to try to revive him or just let him go. We decided to let him go because the doctors couldn't guarantee that he wouldn't become brain-dead. At first they said that there was a forty percent chance that he would get off the machine. But instead of that happening, the percentage went down.

<sup>3</sup>It was hard seeing him like that since I was so close to him. But it was even harder when he didn't want to see me. He said that by seeing me suffer, his suffering was greater. So I had to cut down on seeing him. Everybody that visited him said that he had changed dramatically. They couldn't even recognize him.



<sup>4</sup>The last two days of his life were the worst. I prayed that God would relieve him of his misery. I had come very close to taking him off the machine in order for him not to suffer, but I didn't. Finally, he passed away on November 22, with not the least bit of peace or dignity. The loss was great then and still is, but at least he's not suffering. That's why I believe that when people have terminal diseases with no hope of recovery, they shouldn't place them on machines to prolong their lives of suffering, but instead they should be permitted to die with as much peace and dignity as possible.

<sup>5</sup>Somebody else might believe very strongly that we should try everything in our power to keep people alive. It doesn't matter what kind of illness or disease the people have. What's important is that they are kept alive, especially if they are loved ones. Some people want to keep their loved ones alive with them as long as they can, even if it's by a machine. They also believe it is up to God and medical science to determine whether people should live or die. Sometimes doctors give them hope that their loved ones will recover, and many people wish for a

miracle to happen. With these hopes and wishes in mind, they wait and try everything in order to prolong a life, even if the doctors tell them that there is nothing that can be done.

(Chaffee, 2003, pp. 69-70)