

Teaching Tip Tuesday

Improving College Reading

Incoming Students Vary in Reading Proficiency

According to the UWSP Office of Research and Institutional Effectiveness, between Fall 2019 and Fall 2022 the median ACT Reading Score for incoming students was 22. This score is also the ACT College Readiness Benchmark for reading. Since half of incoming students scored lower than 22, instructors should be aware that some of their assumptions about students' ability to comprehend the written word may be inaccurate. Because effective instruction is tied to meeting students where they are, instructors in all courses should consider the ways that they might help support student success and build the reading comprehensions skills of those students with lower reading proficiency.

Teaching Practices that Improve Reading Comprehension

- **Preview assigned readings.** Prime students to read more deeply by reviewing relevant context and background information beforehand. This can help students relate the assigned reading to existing knowledge, making it more approachable and relevant.
- **Reading guides.** Providing text specific reading guides including comprehension questions and vocabulary can help students to engage effectively with reading assignments.
- **Movie-trailer/summary challenge.** Ask students to summarize the key content of a reading by writing a “movie-trailer” or a summary that encapsulates the key content and dynamics of a particular reading. This can be especially fun for students if you make them begin with the phrase “In a world where...”
- **Metacognitive reflection.** Encourage students to reflect on the aspects of the reading they understood well, and those aspects of the reading that they did not understand. Ask for them to access resources available to help them improve their understanding. Incorporated into online or face-to-face discussions, these reflections can provide important peer learning opportunities as students explain to one another how they made sense of troublesome content.
- **Replace “lecturing” about the reading with active learning assignments.** Rather than providing a means of acquiring the “same” information found in the reading without reading, hold students accountable for reading content by producing their own outlines or study guides detailing the contents of the reading.
- **Provide multiple opportunities to engage the text.** Different elements of a given text may be relevant in different contexts. Ask students to read for content comprehension, then separately for specific terms, for vocabulary choice, and/or for the way that the author incorporates references. Assessing each of these requires different reading skills.
- **One- or two-minute papers on particular passages.** Short writing assignments can allow students to focus attention on specific elements of small passages, like tone, punctuation, or word-choice, and the relationship between the passage and the whole text. Such reflections can improve general understanding of the content and style.
- **Provide contacts for TLC.** The Tutoring and Learning Center provides students with reading help. Make this resource easy for students to access.

Conference on College Composition and Communication. 2021. CCCC Position Statement of the Role of Reading in College Writing Classrooms. <https://cccc.ncte.org/cccc/the-role-of-reading>