

GLS10 Unit 1: Learning Skills

Activity 2: Reading, Writing and Speaking Strategies

Overview

This lesson investigates strategies for reading, writing and speaking effectively. As a reader, you will decode unfamiliar words, preview and skim a text, predict, ask questions and make connections to what you already know about a topic.

Lesson

Reading

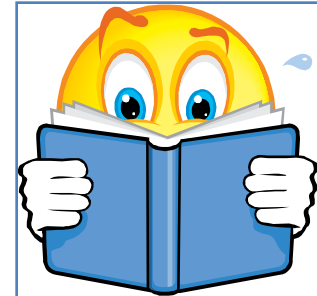
Reading is a complex thinking process that requires you to think about a text before, during, and after reading it.

Before reading, you can:

- Think about what you already know on the topic (activate your **prior knowledge**);
- Predict what the text might be about by looking at the cover and reading the title (Ask yourself if it might be fiction or non-fiction? What genre might it be - A novel? poetry? biography? history? etc);
- **Skim and Scan** to get an overall sense of the text.

To **skim** a text:

1. Read the first paragraph, a middle paragraph and the last paragraph;
2. Look at pictures, diagrams, charts, headings and captions;
3. Do NOT read every word. Let your eyes move quickly from left to right!
4. Think about the general idea and purpose of the text.



To **scan** a text:

1. Look for a specific word or fact without reading all of the text;
2. Look at how the writing is organized - are there highlighted areas? Are there numbered or lettered sections of text?
3. Move your eyes up and down or diagonally looking only for specific information;
4. Think about the specific words or facts you found in the text.

During reading, you can:

Decode harder words by:

1. '**Chunking**' a word by looking for prefixes (before the root word e.g. pre-, re-, con-, pro-) and suffixes (after the root word e.g. -less, -ness, -est, -tion) and trying to find little words in the big words (e.g. 'reminder' has the word 'mind' in it!);
2. Say the word slowly by making the **sound of each letter** or letter group (e.g. 'conference' = k-o-n-f-e-r-en-s);
3. Check to see if what you have just read **makes sense** (e.g. The girl was wishing in the soapy water??? Huh?? Oh.....The girl was WASHING in the soapy water. That's better!);

4. **Skipping** the hard word and reading on. Sometimes it will become clear what the word is after you finish the whole sentence;
5. **Go back** and read the sentence or paragraph again - you might figure it out after re-reading!

If you have figured out how to say the word, but still don't know what it means try:

- checking in a dictionary;
- asking someone else;
- guessing from clues in the text (pictures or words you already know);
- the text might also have a **glossary** of word meanings at the end - check there too for new vocabulary!

After reading, check to make sure you understood what you just read by:

1. **Visualizing** in your mind a picture of what you just read (think of what it might look like, sound like, smell like, feel like....) You can even draw a picture of what you think it looks like;
2. **Ask questions** that can be answered by what you just read (e.g. Why did the main character die? Why does the earth revolve around the sun??);
3. Decide what the **Main Idea** of the text was - what was the MOST important concept you read about? Sometimes you can use a highlighter to pick out the main idea;
4. **Infer** what else might have happened by 'reading between the lines'. Some things aren't actually in the text, but you can guess and predict what the writer meant (e.g. The main character phoned a girl in his class three times - I guess he liked her!);
5. **Synthesize** the new ideas in the text by thinking about what the text meant to you and how it changed your thinking about a topic (e.g. I used to think spiders were gross, but now I think they are actually pretty cool...);
6. **Make connections** to your own life, other books you have read and to the world in general (e.g. 'That reminds me of the time I...; I read another book about.....; Once I heard that....);
7. **Summarize** what you have just read by saying it in your own words to someone else - try to remember the key ideas!

Writing



Another important way in which you can communicate is by writing. There are several steps to creating a good piece of writing.

1. First, generate some ideas;
2. Next, develop and organize your ideas;
3. Then, revise and edit your work.

You need to think about your purpose for writing something first. Do you want to convince someone of your point of view (persuasive writing)? Are you making a list of things you need to buy? Are you writing an email or text message to someone you want communicate with? Who will be reading it?

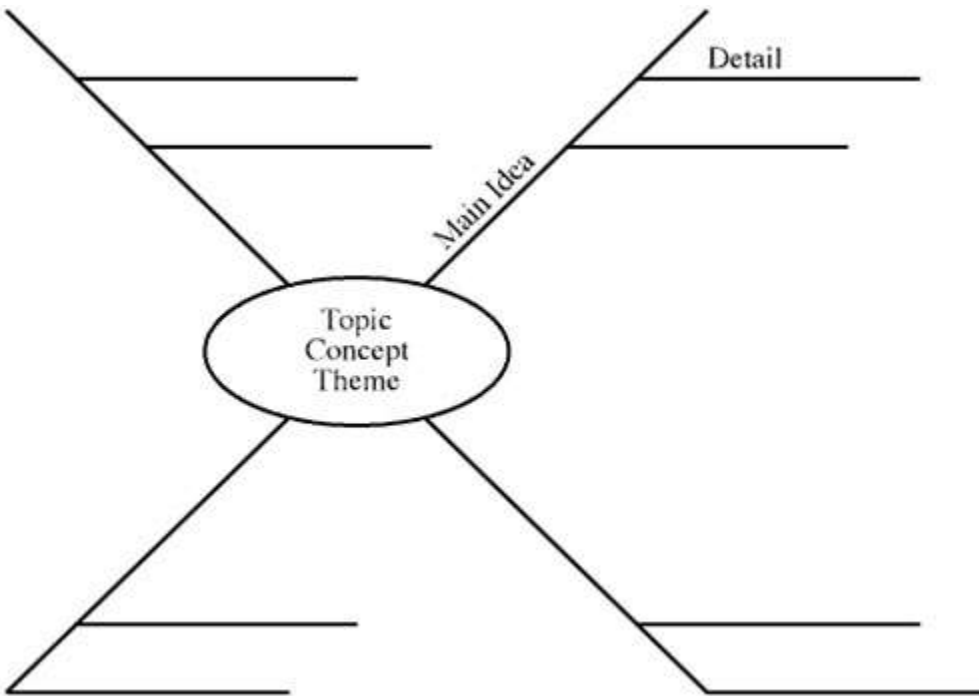
Now you have to come up with some ideas!

It is best to start writing as quickly as you can without worrying about spelling or punctuation - that can come later. Here are some tips to get you started:

- Write as fast as you can for 5 or 10 minutes;
- Don't correct or erase anything (yet);
- Stick to your original topic or purpose as much as possible;
- Read what you have written and start to put your ideas into categories (e.g. main idea, supporting details, not important - dump it!);
- Ask questions about what you have already written - what ideas have you left out? You can put these on sticky notes or just write them in the margins of your paper.

Now it's time to go into greater detail and organize your ideas to make things clear to your reader. You can also use a mind map or graphic organizer to help you. This graphic organizer can help a writer put things into a logical order:

Key frame questions: What is the topic? What is the main idea? What are the supporting details?



The last step is to proof-read your work to polish it up! If you read your writing out loud to yourself (or even better, to someone else) you will be able to hear which parts are confusing or incomplete. Cross out and re-write any changes you want to make. Keep doing this until you are satisfied with your written work.

Now, you can use the **COPS strategy** to correct errors in punctuation, spelling and presentation:

C - Capitals are at the beginning of every sentence and with names and places;

O - Overall appearance is neat, including handwriting, spacing and complete sentences;

P - Punctuation is in place (e.g. periods at the end of sentences, commas and quotation marks in the right places);

S - Spelling is correct.

Read through your written work **four** times. Each time, concentrate on one of the things in the COPS list. Sometimes it is hard to know if a word is spelled correctly. Here are some strategies for checking out a word:

- Say the word slowly and write the letters of the sounds you hear;
- Try to visualize the word in your head;
- Try writing the word 3 different ways and seeing which one looks 'right' to you;
- Use a dictionary;
- Ask someone else if they know it;
- Use spell-check if you are using a word processing program.

You now have a completed piece of writing! It's time to let your reader do his or her job. Ask for feedback from your audience. Your message should be loud and clear.

Speaking

Sometimes, you will have to present your written work, a visual display or a slide show and talk about it. Don't be intimidated! If you know your topic well and have prepared in advance you will have the confidence to put on a great show. Practice your presentation a few times and then use this checklist to help you be a more effective and interesting speaker:

| | |
|--|--|
| Do I have a good knowledge of the topic? | |
| Did I gather information from many sources? | |
| Did I use visual aids to support my presentation? | |
| Did I use appropriate tone of voice and language? | |
| Did I make eye contact with the audience? | |
| Did I speak fluently without 'false starts'? | |
| Did I vary the volume of your speaking? | |
| Did I vary the rate of your speech? | |
| Did I articulate clearly? | |
| Did I use connecting words such as 'and, but, then, because'? | |
| Did I explain unfamiliar words? | |
| Did I speak for an appropriate length of time? | |
| Did I avoid unnecessary movement such as shuffling my feet, tapping my fingers or shaking? | |
| Did I involve the audience in my presentation? | |
| Did I engage and inspire my audience? | |

When you are speaking in a group, there are certain rules that need to be followed. This is known as **Discussion Etiquette**. Some of the rules are:

- Participate often;
- Take turns speaking - one person speaks at a time;
- Let others know you aren't finished speaking by using phrases such as 'In addition', 'furthermore', etc.;
- Wait for your turn - don't interrupt;
- Show your interest by maintaining eye contact with the speaker, nodding to show you are listening (not nodding off!) and using positive facial expressions;
- Use respectful language even if you don't agree with the speaker;
- Listen carefully and attentively to other speakers;
- Avoid sarcasm and put-downs;
- Stay on topic;
- Stay open to new ideas;
- Ask questions if you don't understand something;
- Don't hog the conversation.



Discussions can be fun and interesting if everyone plays fairly. If they don't, discussions can turn into negative experiences where people are afraid to speak openly for fear of being bullied or ridiculed. During a discussion, treat others with the respect you would like for yourself!

Assignment

1. Create a brochure that describes some of the reading, writing and speaking strategies you have read about. Add subtitles and graphics or pictures to make it interesting.

| Rubric: Reading, Writing and Speaking Strategies Brochure | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| Categories | Level 1 (50 - 59%) | Level 2 (60 - 69%) | Level 3 (70 - 79%) | Level 4 (80 - 100%) |
| <u>Knowledge</u> Describes concepts | Describes concepts providing limited details | Describes concepts providing some details | Describes concepts providing considerable details | Describes concepts providing thorough details |
| <u>Application</u> Applies a variety of effective reading, writing and speaking strategies | Applies strategies with limited clarity | Applies strategies with some clarity | Applies strategies with considerable clarity | Applies strategies with a high degree of clarity |
| <u>Communication</u> Communicates information in brochure effectively with detail | Communicates information with limited effectiveness and detail | Communicates information with some effectiveness and detail. | Communicates information with considerable effectiveness and detail. | Communicates information with a high degree of effectiveness and detail. |