

Reading Strategies

Overview: This lesson on the reading standard and reading strategies will be specific to taking standardized tests. We all know that reading is a critical skill, but if adults are unable to use reading strategies to improve their test-taking skills, their performance will always be hindered.

Educational Goal: The goal of this lesson is for the learners (1) identify specific strategies that would improve their test-taking ability and (2) respond positively to the information and how it relates to their lives and goals.

Objectives:

- Cognitive:** — Define reading.
 — Summarize reading strategies that would improve their test-taking skills.
- Affective:** — Receive and listen to the information.
 — Respond to the value of the reading strategies.

Skill Connections: The learners will read with understanding, interpret written information, and identify strategies to monitor their comprehension. Learners will listen actively and ask questions. This lesson has connections with the Tennessee KSA – *Reading*, GED – *Reading*, and the EFF Standard – *Read With Understanding*. (Appendix II)

Teaching Strategy: The teacher will use a variety of reading material to demonstrate the different purposes for reading. There are many factors that can hinder a learner’s performance on a test. Often the learner does not understand the question that is being asked, or she is unfamiliar with the format of the test.

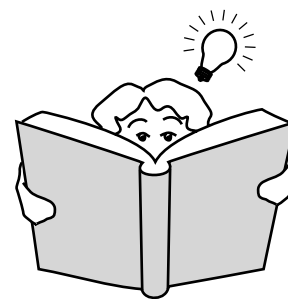
Lesson Plan

Homework Review: *Academic Survival Guide*

Thought for the Day:

“If I try to be like him, who will be like me?” —*Yiddish Proverb*

Be yourself. Give yourself a voice as a worker, parent, and citizen. Don’t compare yourself to anyone else. No one is better than anyone else. Take independent action by focusing on what you do and how well you do it.



Time: 1 hour

Teaching Materials:

- Newspapers, television log, electric bills, telephone bills, children’s books, telephone books, etc.
- EFF Standard – *Read With Understanding*
- Suggested reference materials for taking tests:
Study Skills for Adults Taking Tests – Steck Vaughn; *Spectrum Test Prep* – McGraw-Hill; *Strategies for Success in Reading* – Steck Vaughn; *Building Reading Strategies* – Steck Vaughn; *Test Anxiety* – Scriptographic Educational Materials
- *Equipped for the Future Content Standards* – NIFL

Learner Materials:

- Learner Note Taker
- Copy of EFF Standard – *Read With Understanding*
- Copies of sample tests (collect sections of different tests)

Teaching Tip



Begin each day with a review of the previous day’s homework. Allow 15-20 minutes to review the homework.

Then begin the “Thought for the Day.” Give students time to answer the four questions. Then discuss the “Thought for the Day.”

Teaching Tip

The method of instruction for this lesson will be *Read, Write, Discuss* and lecture. Take time to set up the lesson with the learners. Move from the familiar to the unfamiliar. Begin the lesson by showing learners a variety of familiar materials, i.e., newspaper, television log, telephone books. Ask the learners to identify one way that all of the materials are exactly alike. Write their responses on the board. Help learners understand that all of the materials have words, sentences, numbers, and/or pictures and that all of the materials contain information.

Next ask them to identify one way that these materials are different. It may help to have two columns on the board that are titled “Alike” and “Different.” Help the learners understand that all the materials have different types of information and are read for different purposes. Spend about 10 minutes on this discussion.

We all have our own unique learning clocks. We all have our own unique talents and skills. Be proud of who you are by being excellent in everything you do.

Introduction

Attention: We’re going to start today to look at how we can use our reading skills to improve our test-taking skill. This will help you to take tests in adult education, on college placement, or on the job.

Question: What is hardest for you when you take a test?

Anticipated Responses: — *I don’t understand the questions.*

— *They ask about things I’ve never heard of before.*

Motivation: Most people do not like to take tests. Tests don’t always show exactly what we know, but they are used as a yardstick to measure performance for teachers and for employers. But the good news is that we can become better at test-taking skills. There are many factors that can hinder your performance on a test. These may include: not being familiar with the format of the test, being afraid, not understanding the questions or the directions, not knowing what to look at on the page, and not seeing the value of the test. Today you will learn a few simple strategies to help you become better at reading unfamiliar material.

Overview: Almost everyone has been tested at some time in his or her lives. Most of the times when you take a test, you are under pressure to perform at your best. This lesson lays the foundation for you to improve your test-taking performance by becoming aware of and improving your reading strategies. We will use different types of materials to discover the purpose for reading, and we will practice reading in many contexts to become familiar with the types of materials you may encounter when testing.

Body of Lesson

Main Point 1. Determine the Reading Purpose

The definition we are going to use for reading in this lesson is: ***Being able to read means getting meaning from text and being able to combine new information with prior knowledge.*** I am going to give you a variety of reading materials: telephone book, newspaper, television log, advertise-

ments, electric, cable or phone bills, map and children's books.

Question: What one way that all of these materials are alike?

(What you want the learners to discover is that all of these materials are reading materials. They all present information. Learners may be able to identify the point right away. If not, record all their thoughts on the board then ask them the question again.)

Question: What is one way that these materials are different?

(The learners will discover that all of the materials present different information and the purpose for reading the materials will be different.)

Look at the materials and say the purpose for reading them. Before you read anything you should determine the purpose for reading the materials. With familiar materials like we just used we determine the purpose without thinking about it. When we test, we may not stop to think about the purpose for reading. Let's look at some sample tests.

Main Point 2. Reading Strategies for Different Types of Questions

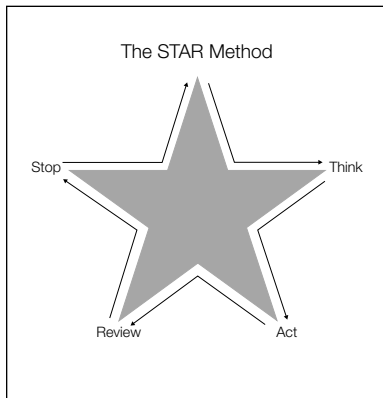
There are several types of questions on most tests. Let's look at some of these and identify a strategy to help answer the questions.

1. **Multiple-Choice Questions.** These questions require you to select one answer from several possibilities. First, read the question then read all the options before choosing an answer. If the multiple-choice question is about a story or long article, go back to the article and skim for information from the questions. If there are pictures, maps, or graphs on the page, be sure you understand what information you need to answer the question. (Show learners a sample of a multiple-choice question.)
2. **Main Idea Questions.** These types of questions usually ask about paragraphs that you have read. The main idea is the subject that you are reading about. The main idea can be stated or it can be implied. Sometimes you can find the main idea easily because it is stated in the first paragraph. However, if it is not stated, but implied, you will need to carefully read the entire passage. Use the *STAR* method. *Stop*—Slow down and relax. *Think*—Think it through. Think about each sentence. How are all the sentences related? *Act*—Skim the passage and ask what is the writer trying to say? Choose the best answer. *Review*—When you have completed the section, go back and quickly review your work.

Teaching Tip



Explain the purpose of the lesson and move from familiar materials to test-taking materials. Learners may have very negative feelings about tests; however, this lesson comes after the mind-mapping lesson on *Why We Assess*. Link this part of the discussion back to the previous lesson. Allow time for learners to express their thoughts and feelings. Encourage questions and be ready to refer learners to additional materials that will help them with test-taking strategies.



Teaching Tip



Give learners samples that require reading, math, graphs, questions about learning styles, language, spelling, etc. (*Spectrum Test Prep*, McGraw Hill is a source you might use.) Learners do not all need the same samples. Ask learners to look at the sheet they have and see if they can determine the purpose for reading the material. At this point some learners may become frustrated and insist that they are reading to find the answer and pass the test. This is true, but to be able to find the answer they must understand the directions in each section of the test and how to answer different questions.

- 3. Fill-in-the-Blank Questions.** Read the sentence with each of the choices then select the one that makes the most sense.
- 4. Questions that refer to visuals.** Read all the charts, maps, posters, diagrams, and pictures. Be sure to look for the most important information on the visual. There may be a lot of information presented, but try to narrow the information down to the most important. For example, if the visual is an advertisement from the paper, look carefully to find what the ad is about. Does the visual explain what the passage is about? Does the visual give you information that is not in the passage? You will need to understand what the question is asking. This will give you the clues you need to answer the question. You may have to take your answer directly from the visual or you may have to analyze the information on the visual in order to answer the question.

Main Point 3. Monitor Comprehension and Adjust Reading Strategies

1. Be sure you understand the directions. Do not spend a lot of time with each question. If the question is too difficult, skip it and go to the next question. You can come back later and review the item you skipped.
2. In a test-taking situation you will have to be aware of your time as you work through the test. You can assess your reading strategies by asking, Do I know what information the question is asking? Am I in a hurry to finish? Am I sleepy or bored? Am I finishing the test before the time is up? Did I check my answers? Am I looking for those red signal words like *always*, *never*, *choose all of the above*, *choose none of the above*, and *choose the best*? Have I read the directions carefully? Am I aware of the key words in the section? Words like *circle*, *read*, *write*, *underline*, *choose*, *solve*, *use*, *compare*, *describe*, *estimate*, and *explain* are key words on most tests. Look for these words. They will help you to know exactly what to do.
3. When taking a test, how well you do depends on how well you can analyze the test information and make decisions about the information presented. When you read the information, break it down into parts. Look for ideas that are similar and restated throughout the passage. Look for information that is compared or contrasted and use your questions from the “Thoughts for the Day. What is the author saying? Why is it important? Sometimes you will find that a lot of

information is presented but is not important to answering the question. By breaking the selection down into its simplest parts you may be better able to answer the questions.

4. What do you already know about the passage or the problem? Have you ever read, heard, or seen anything like this before? Again use *STAR* to help you slow down and think about the question. Many questions are about real-life situations. Think about your experience.

Some questions will be subject related. Have you been introduced to this problem before? Combine what you already know with what the question is asking. Remember, what is the purpose for reading this section? Is it to solve a math problem? Or is the purpose to analyze a map and answer the questions based on the map?

Conclusion

Summary: Today we have looked at several reading strategies to use when you are taking a test. Now let's review the different strategies and practice using them with different types of tests.

Re-Motivation: We have discovered today that we can be better at taking tests. One way to do that is to practice. Another way to improve is to become aware of reading strategies and to use them when taking tests. These strategies will help you with any type of reading that you do. You can teach them to your children and help them become better readers, and you can use them on the job to interpret and analyze information.

Close: “When your confidence goes up, your competence goes up at the same time.” (*Good Stuff*, Key Dooley Progressive Business Publications, 2000.) As you continue to learn and use these strategies, you will lose some of your fear of testing and your performance will improve.

Teaching Tips



Give each learner a sample of test questions from McGraw-Hill's *Test Prep* and ask them to answer the questions. After they have completed the questions, ask them to identify the types of questions and the strategies they used to answer the questions.

This is a lot of information to present to learners, and they will need more than one practice to become confident with their test-taking abilities. Have several books available for learners to practice their test-taking skills throughout the course.

Some programs will spend the remainder of the day administering the complete TABE battery.

ACTIVITY: Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) Complete Battery

Goal: The object of this complete battery assessment activity is for the student to (1) comprehend his or her initial reading, math, and language levels; what he or she knows and needs improvement in; and (2) respond to the value of diagnostic assessment.

The students have completed the TABE Locator Test that provided some initial test-taking insights and identified the appropriate TABE test level. They performed some preliminary analysis of their strengths, areas to improve, and test-taking strategies. The TABE complete battery will provide greater insights to what they know, areas for further classroom instruction, and further development of test-taking strategies.

Procedure:

1. Follow the TABE Complete Battery Test Instructions in the *Examiner's Manual* starting on page 50. Be familiar with the various instructions for preparing the test, administering the test, and scoring the test. Given the length of the complete battery series of test, decide how you will administer it with appropriate breaks.
2. In the *Learning Skills* course we start the TABE testing on Wednesday of the first week. Learners will complete the majority of the specific subject tests with only one or two tests remaining. We finish TABE testing on the following Wednesday.
3. Score each individual test. We circle the number of the test item missed so it is clear which educational objectives and questions need to be reviewed.

Summary: To conclude this activity, the teacher should ask the following questions of the learner prior to the review:

1. What have you learned about yourself and testing?
2. Why is that knowledge important?
3. How can you use it for yourself?

The teacher should guide the learners' discussion towards reaching the activity objectives.