

Guiding Students to Read Online

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Teaching and Learning Services

Using Reader's Guides with Students

Why do some students struggle to understand the reading we assign? They often enter postsecondary lacking one or all of the following:

- General reading skill and strategies (the ability to make meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary, of ideas expressed in complex sentence structure, of text structures etc.)
- Academic reading skill and strategies (the specialized skills needed to read textbooks and articles associated with post-secondary courses)
- Disciplinary reading skill and strategies (the specialized skills needed to read in a specific discipline. For example, nursing requires different reading skills than history)

Lack of skill often leads to a lack of self-confidence in being able to “get” what the reading is about - so students don't even try.

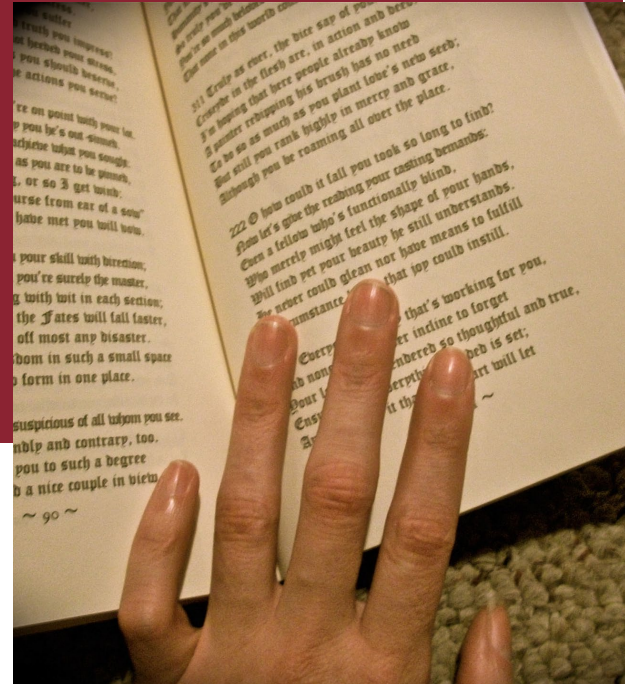
What is a reader's guide?

A reader's guide is an instructor-created set of questions and/or prompts that helps students to:

- identify what's important in a chapter or article
- understand a text's organizational structure
- engage in deeper learning of the material by reading actively
- develop reading strategies that can be used in other courses
- develop reading strategies specific to your discipline

It is not a lengthy, “Cole's Notes”-style summary of the reading or a set of “cheat” notes that tells students what's important in the reading. It often contains general questions that point out what students need to do before, during, and after they read a selection to understand it.

You can tailor the questions in the sample guide on the back of this sheet to the content in your reading, your purpose(s) for assigning the reading, and the needs of your students.



Introducing Reader's Guides to Your Students

- In an online video or in real time, introduce the assigned reading, and its main concepts, together with reading guide and how it will help students understand the reading.
- At first, you may want to demo how to use the reading guide by showing how you would answer the questions.
- Then, you can ask students to work on looking for the answers - individually, in pairs, or in groups - in real time so you can monitor their progress.
- Yes, you'll need to mark students' answers to the guide questions if you want students to use it.



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Sample Reader's Guide

Before you begin reading...

1. What is the title of the chapter?
2. Write three questions you would like to have answered from this chapter.
3. What are the subheadings listed in this chapter?
4. For each subheading listed in question three, write one statement predicting what you think the paragraph will discuss, based on the subheading.
5. Words in boldface are important to focus on. What are the bold face words in this chapter?
6. Using questions 3 and 4, briefly put together an outline that effectively displays the organizational structure of this passage.
7. Skim each of the paragraphs, noting whether or not the paragraph will discuss what you predicted in question 4.

While you are reading...

1. Underline any ideas you believe are important.
2. Write the following symbols next to the sentences as you feel they are necessary. Be ready to raise these points during class.
 - ? = I have a question about this
 - A = I agree with this
 - D = I disagree with this
 - ! = Interesting or important point
 - C = Confusing
3. Write down two ideas from the text that you believe your instructor may put on a test.
4. Using these two ideas, write down any information you knew about these items before reading the passage.
5. How does the information from the chapter relate to the information you knew about these items prior to reading the chapter?
6. Write down when you noticed you were not understanding the material? What did you do to try to understand?

After you finish reading...

1. Looking back to question 2 in the "Before reading" section, did you find the answers to your questions?
2. Give a brief summary of what you just read.
3. Was summarizing the chapter difficult? Yes or No? Why?
4. How did the strategies you used before and during reading help you to understand the chapter?

Adapted from Culver, T. (2011). Using the reader's guide to increase reading compliance and metacognitive awareness. *Faculty Focus*.
<https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/effective-teaching-strategies/using-the-readers-guide-to-increase-reading-compliance-and-metacognitive-awareness>

