

# **READING COMPREHENSION**

# Reading Is Important:

- *The job market now demands a workforce that is more highly educated than ever.*
- *In summary, people just aren't reading as much anymore and yet the need for reading, comprehension, and communication skills (verbal and written) has increased.*

# Motivation Is Necessary:

- *However, most people, children and adults, do not spend any significant portion of their free time reading.*
- *Without committing time to reading, no one can gain the reading skills or knowledge they need to succeed in school, at work, or in life in general.*
- *The best way to improve your reading efficiency is to read a lot.*

## What is Reading Comprehension?

- ***According to Webster's Dictionary, comprehension is "the capacity for understanding fully; the act or action of grasping with the intellect."***
- ***Webster also tells us that reading is "to receive or take in the sense of (as letters or symbols) by scanning; to understand the meaning of written or printed matter; to learn from what one has seen or found in writing or printing."***

## ***Skills for increasing comprehension:***

- 1. Finding main ideas and supporting details/evidence***
- 2. Making inferences and drawing conclusions***
- 3. Recognizing a text's patterns of organization***
- 4. Summarizing/Paraphrasing***
- 5. Reading for Information/details***

# ***Skills for increasing comprehension:***

***6. Reading and Interpreting non-prose forms (e.g., graphs, tables, charts, diagrams)***

***7. Understanding opinions and detecting biases***

***8. Identifying tone, mood and style***

***9. Rhetorical patterns such as (comparison-contrast, cause and effect, description and narration)***

# Levels of Comprehension

- *The three levels of comprehension, or sophistication of thinking, are presented in the following hierarchy from the least to the most sophisticated level of reading.*

*Least = surface, simple reading    Most = in-depth, complex reading*

# Level One

***LITER A L - what is actually stated.***

- ***Facts and details***
- ***Rote learning and memorization***
- ***Surface understanding only***

***TESTS in this category are objective tests dealing with true / false, multiple choice and fill-in-the blank questions.***

***Common questions used to illicit this type of thinking are who, w hat, when, and w here questions.***



# Level Two

***INTER PR ETIV E - what is implied or meant, rather than what is actually stated.***

- ***Drawing inferences***
- ***Tapping into prior knowledge / experience***
- ***Attaching new learning to old information***
- ***Making logical leaps and educated guesses***

***Reading between the lines to determine what is meant by what is stated.***

***TESTS in this category are subjective, and the types of questions asked are open- ended, thought-provoking questions like why, what if, and how .***

# Level Three

***APPLIED - taking what was said (literal) and then what was meant by what was said (interpretive) and then extend (apply) the concepts or ideas beyond the situation.***

- ***Analyzing***
- ***Synthesizing***
- ***Applying***
- ***In this level we are analyzing or synthesizing information and applying it to other information.***

# **Identifying Topics, Main Ideas, and Supporting Details**

- ***Understanding the topic, the gist, or the larger conceptual framework of a textbook chapter, an article, a paragraph, a sentence or a passage is a sophisticated reading task.***
- ***Being able to draw conclusions, evaluate, and critically interpret articles or chapters is important for overall comprehension in college reading.***

- ***Textbook chapters, articles, paragraphs, sentences, or passages all have topics and main ideas.***
- ***The topic is the broad, general theme or message. It is what some call the subject.***
- ***The main idea is the "key concept" being expressed.***
- ***Details, major and minor, support the main idea by telling how, what, when, where, why, how much, or how many.***

# Grasping the Main Idea:

***A paragraph is a group of sentences related to a particular topic, or central theme. Every paragraph has a key concept or main idea.***

***The main idea is the most important piece of information the author wants you to know about the concept of that paragraph.***

# Grasping the Main Idea:

- *The main idea may be stated at the beginning of the paragraph, in the middle, or at the end. The sentence in which the main idea is stated is the topic sentence of that paragraph.*
- *The topic sentence announces the general theme ( or portion of the theme) to be dealt with in the paragraph. Although the topic sentence may appear anywhere in the paragraph, it is usually first - and for a very good reason.*

# Identifying the Topic:

- *The first thing you must be able to do to get at the main idea of a paragraph is to identify the topic - the subject of the paragraph. Your strategy for topic identification is simply to ask yourself the question, "What is this about*
- *The bulk of an expository paragraph is made up of supporting sentences (major and minor details), which help to explain or prove the main idea. These sentences present facts, reasons, examples, definitions, comparison, contrasts, and other pertinent details. They are most important because they sell the main idea.*



# Identifying the Topic:

- *The last sentence of a paragraph is likely to be a concluding sentence. It is used to sum up a discussion, to emphasize a point, or to restate all or part of the topic sentence so as to bring the paragraph to a close. The last sentence may also be a transitional sentence leading to the next paragraph.*
- *Besides expository paragraphs, in which new information is presented and discussed, these longer writings contain three types of paragraphs:  
introductory, transitional, and summarizing.*

***Introductory paragraphs tell you, in advance, such things as***  
***(2)the main ideas of the chapter or section;***  
***(3)the extent or limits of the coverage;***  
***(4)how the topic is developed; and***  
***(5)the writer's attitude toward the topic.***

***Transitional paragraphs are usually short; their sole function is to tie together what you have read so far and what is to come - to set the stage for succeeding ideas of the chapter or section.***

***Summarizing paragraphs are used to restate briefly the main ideas of the chapter or section. The writer may also draw some conclusion from these ideas, or speculate on some conclusion based on the evidence he/she has presented.***

***All three types should alert you: the introductory paragraph of things to come; the transitional paragraph of a new topic; and the summarizing paragraph of main ideas that you should have gotten.***

# Exercise:

- *Read the following paragraph and underline the stated main idea. Write down in your own words what you are able to conclude from the information.*

*The rules of conduct during an examination are clear. No books, calculators or papers are allowed in the test room. Proctors will not allow anyone with such items to take the test. Anyone caught cheating will be asked to leave the room. His or her test sheet will be taken. The incident will be reported to the proper authority. At the end of the test period, all materials will be returned to the proctor. Failure to abide by these rules will result in a failing grade for this test.*

# **Answer:**

***You should have underlined the first sentence in the paragraph - this is the stated main idea.***

***What can be concluded from the information is: If you do not follow the rules, you will automatically fail the test.***

***This concluding information is found in the last sentence.***

***You can't comprehend the subject matter if you haven't identified the topic, the main idea, and the***