Strategies for Reading

Assign Realistic Reading Loads

- Choose readings at students’ level – marginally skilled readers. Use a “Reader Level Calculator” you can find on the web
- Require only “essential” readings; recommend the rest
- Accept maxim “less is more”
- Read assignments and time yourself

Consider Reasons for Students’ Poor Motivation

1. Perceived irrelevance of courses to their everyday lives
2. Unrealistic perceptions of their learning
3. Low self-confidence
4. Personal problems
5. Time constraints
6. Ineffective instructional strategies

Improving Reading Skills

1. Incorporate simple teaching methods into course in order to enhance student reading and comprehension.
2. Training in reading skills requires a change of attitudes, experimentation, and conscientious efforts by college professors.
3. Set a realistic goal as to how much students can read in the content course.
4. Write the minimal weekly reading time in the syllabus and remind students about it throughout the semester, and read the assignments yourself to gauge the amount of time required. Remember that as an expert you may be able to read as double the rate of your students.
5. Reserve time for discussion of reading materials.
6. Develop a monitoring and evaluation system to ensure that students read what is assigned, such as simple quizzes, one-minute papers, outlines, etc.
7. An open-book examination may not be an entirely effective method to ensure that students read assigned materials.

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1 Linda Nilson and E.H. Hobson. Reaching the 75% of Students Who Don’t Do the Readings. POD conference, 10/27/05.
Enticing Students to Engage with the Text

1. Prepare 4-5 questions for students to answer that can be found in the text.
2. Send them on a fact-finding mission. Find the facts related to x, y, and/or z.
3. List all unfamiliar words or terms. Come to class prepared to share at least two of these definitions.
4. Ask students to write their own version of the author’s central message or thesis.
5. Identify the subtopics and design a question for each.
6. Indicate what other ideas the reading substantiates, contradicts, or amplifies.
7. Summarize a reaction paper that is one to two pages long and has a specific topic. Grade them and use them as a basis for instruction.

5 Steps to Reading Textbooks or Point-of-View Nonfiction

1. Pre-read for reflection – in-class discussion or homework
   - From the title, what do you think the book is about
   - Read the pre-face/foreword. Now what do you think the book is about.
   - When was the book published, and does this matter? Why/why not?
   - What is the book’s purpose? Why is it assigned for this course?
   - How is the book structured?

2. Preview chapter – homework
   - Before reading the whole chapter, read first in the order: Introduction, chapter sub-headings, graphics, italicized words, conclusion/summary, and end-of-chapter questions.
   - In a sentence or two, what is this chapter about?

3. Review purpose for reading – what are you looking for as you read
   - Study questions to answer (multiple choice, matching, fill-in, short-answer, essay)
   - Problem(s) to solve (may or may not be end-of-chapter problems)

4. Read with purpose for answers, solutions – written homework
   - Write out answers to the questions or solutions to the problem(s) to hand in (worth at least 1 point or a $\sqrt{\text{√}}$ for a good faith effort).

5. Review chapter – written homework
   - Write out main points you learned, reassembling into whole.

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4 Linda Nilson and E.H. Hobson. Reaching the 75% of Students Who Don’t Do the Readings. POD conference, 10/27/05.