

How We Think and Learn

The Seven Habits of Successful Readers



Good readers are not more intelligent than readers who struggle. Some of the brightest people in the world have trouble reading. People who struggle with reading can become successful readers. Good readers develop habits that help them to increase their comprehension skills. It is not necessarily easy, but it can be done.

The Habits of Successful Readers

1. They get their minds ready and think while they read
2. They connect what they already know with what they are trying to learn
3. They are curious and ask questions while they read
4. They predict what will happen next
5. They draw inferences (read between the lines)
6. They act as word detectives
7. They monitor their understanding

Think About It

Look at the list of habits above.

1. Are there any words you wonder about?
2. Do all the habits make sense?

The following pages describe in more detail each of these habits. They include questions and exercises that will help you better understand what it takes to be a good reader.

1

Get your Mind Ready



Successful readers look over a text before they start reading. This is similar to looking at a map before starting on a road trip or looking at a blueprint for a building.

What do you think?

1. Can you think of an example in real life, where it would be useful to know ahead of time what might happen?

2. Look through the textbook you will use this year or next. What are some examples of what you will be asked to study?

2

Connect the Dots in Your Mind



Successful readers think while they read. They try to connect what they already know to what they are reading. This process makes comprehension possible.

Try This

Imagine a book with the title: ***Teen Astrology: The Ultimate Guide to Making Your Life Your Own.***

a. What do you expect to read in the book?

b. What is your reaction to the title? Are you curious about the secrets inside? Do you think this is for girls only?

c. Do you figure whatever the author will tell you is mostly hocus pocus? What are your assumptions based on?

3

Be Curious and Ask Questions

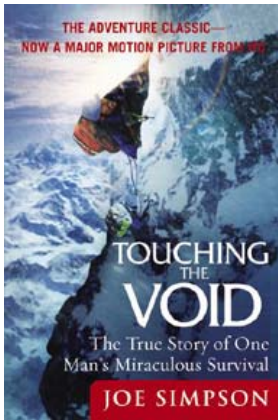
Successful readers wonder about the things they read. They ask questions in their minds and then try to answer them for themselves and for others.



Try This

Read the book review¹ below. Write five questions that you might have about the story. If you are stuck, try questions that start with *what, when, where, how, and why*.

Book Review: *Touching the Void*



Joe Simpson and his climbing partner, Simon Yates, had just reached the top of a 21,000-foot peak in the Andes when disaster struck. Simpson plunged off the vertical face of an ice ledge, breaking his leg. In the hours that followed, darkness fell and a blizzard raged as Yates tried to lower his friend to safety. Finally, Yates was forced to cut the rope, moments before he would have been pulled to his own death.

The next three days were an impossibly grueling ordeal for both men. Yates, certain that Simpson was dead, returned to base camp consumed with grief and guilt over abandoning him. Miraculously, Simpson had survived the fall, but crippled, starving, and severely frostbitten was trapped in a deep crevasse.

1.

2.

3.

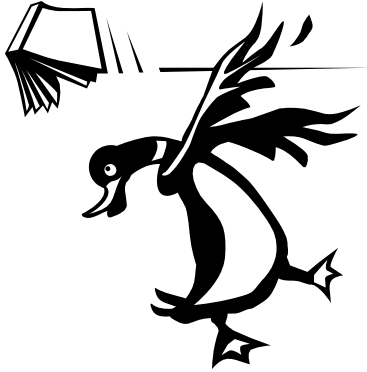
4.

5.

¹ Book review of *Touching the Void* by Joe Simpson retrieved from www.amazon.com, September 13, 2004

4

Predict What Will Happen Next



Successful readers use their minds to predict what might happen next in a story or in an article.

Try This

Read the start of the following story and predict what will happen.

Cemetery Path

Ivan was a timid little man, so timid that the villagers called him Pigeon or mocked him, calling him Ivan the Terrible. Every night Ivan stopped at the saloon that was at the edge of the village cemetery. Ivan never crossed the cemetery to his lonely shack on the other side, although the path through the cemetery would save him many minutes. But he had never taken that short cut – not even in the full light of the moon.

Late on winter night, when bitter wind and snow beat against the saloon, the other people in the saloon took up the familiar mockery and taunts. Ivan's protest only fed their meanness. They all jeered cruelly when a young lieutenant flung this horrid challenge at him.

1. What do you think the challenge was?

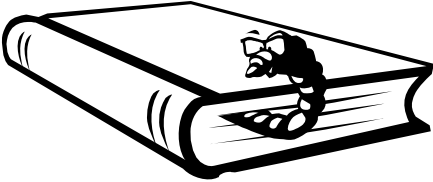
2. What happens next?

3. Write the next part on the following page. Use the back of the page if you would like to write the rest of the story or need more room. Draw an illustration on the side if you like.

5

Make Inferences

Successful readers read between the lines (draw inferences) and pay attention to ideas that the author may only hint at.



Try This

Imagine a story that starts: “**Sunday morning, M. walked out of the house, eyes red and swollen.**”

1. What thoughts come to your mind regarding M?

2. What do you think happened in the story right before this sentence?

Now imagine that the first sentence reads: “**M. walked out of the house, suitcase in hand.**”

3. What inferences would you draw? Why would M have a suitcase?

4. What do you expect to read in the story next?

5. Let's try one more. If the sentence reads “***M. walked out of the house, the gun still smoking.***”

- a. What's going through your mind now?

- b. Do you think M is a man or a woman? Why?

6

Act Like a Word Detective

Successful readers pay attention to words. If they don't know a word they may make an informed guess, or they make take the word apart. If they still don't understand, they ask others or use the dictionary. They also keep track of new words by writing them down and reviewing them.



Try This

See if you can figure out the meaning of the words below just by paying attention as you read.

Queen Bees at Richmond High

*“Natalie and Amanda, the quiet not so pretty girls, had always hated Cindy, their **nemesis** in junior high. Without a doubt, Cindy was the most popular girl in school, partly because she used her parents’ money to buy friends, partly because she was pretty. A lot of the girls wanted to be like her. Cindy went out of her way to make the less popular girls feel stupid and ugly. She spread rumors behind their backs. But then a new girl appeared at the school who was even smarter and prettier than Cindy and had a nicer personality. Before you could say “Charge it on my Gold Card,” the new girl became the new “**Queen Bee**” of Richmond High. When Natalie and Amanda saw their old enemy taken down, they had a hard time hiding their sense of **Schadenfreude**.”*

1. What clues are there in the text to help you understand the meaning of *nemesis*?

2. What knowledge do you have of school that can help you figure out what the author means by **Queen Bee**?

3. What feeling do you think the term **Schadenfreude** refers to? Imagine how Natalie and Amanda felt at the end of the paragraph. (Hint: It takes more than one word to express this feeling in English.)
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Use Word Attack Skills

Good readers also try to break down the words that they don't know and sound them out. This is sometimes called "using word attack skills." They also pay attention to pre-fixes to see if there are clues to meaning. Both "sub-" and "super" are popular pre-fixes that can be used with other words parts.

Think about what the words below might mean.

- a. The word **sonic** refers to sound. Sonic speed is the speed of sound. Which airplane is faster, a plane that flies at **subsonic** speed or one that flies at **supersonic** speed?
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- b. When you read that Edmonton has **subzero** temperatures in the winter, is the temperature above or below freezing?
-

- c. Would you rather spend time with a person who has **superhuman** or **subhuman** qualities?
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- d. You read a story about a **lieutenant** and a **sub-lieutenant**. Which one is the superior officer?
-

7

Monitor Your Understanding



Good readers stop when they realize they no longer understand what they are reading. Sometimes they reread a passage or read more slowly. Other times, they read on, to see if the meaning becomes clear. This is often a good idea when you read a mystery or a poem.

Try This

Listen to your teacher read the following verses and just pay attention to the mood in the poem. Don't worry about the strange words. What's going on?

Jabberwocky

by Lewis Carroll

*'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.*

*"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!"*



Remember

Good readers have good days and bad days just like the rest of us. They don't expect to be able to focus and concentrate all the time. They don't expect to understand everything. But when they have difficulty, these habits help them to read faster, more efficiently and effectively, so they can better understand what they are reading.