

25 Strategies before reading

Goal

When the readers know how to prepare themselves for an upcoming reading assignment, the probability is higher that their reading comprehension process in fact improves. This exercise provides students with a useful strategy for this purpose.

3rd–9th grade

30 minutes



Materials:
current texts from classroom instruction, short stories, non-fiction, books, magazines. The materials must be prepared for 3 different age and proficiency levels.

Procedure:

- Introduction, preliminary information: the teacher demonstrates a specific example of how to assess and get to know a text in three steps prior to reading it. Questions posed to the text include, for example:
 - What do I expect from this text; which reading strategy is useful (should I skim through the text; do I have to know every little detail; am I just looking for certain information)?
 - Which genre/kind of text does it belong to?
 - How difficult is the text; what difficulties should be anticipated and where, and what should I do to overcome them?
 - Do I need previous knowledge to understand this text?
- For this assignment and all subsequent exercises, the following steps apply, which students also receive in writing or copy from the board:
 - **Recognize theme and text type:** discern textual characteristics (pictures, charts, titles, etc.).
 - **Activate previous knowledge:** make notes of key words to the topic, formulate assumptions and questions about text content.
 - **Take a reading sample:** closely read a few sentences, consider how to best read the whole text and estimate the time required for it.
- The students receive differentiated texts (according to age and proficiency level) and follow the above referenced three steps. This can occur individually or by working with a partner.
- Concluding with a short exchange of experiences with this procedure.

Remarks:

- Exercises of this kind should of course be conducted repeatedly and with different texts. It would be best if these reading strategies could be practiced with actual texts from the classroom.
- The exercises 25–27 are closely connected and therefore should be presented to and practiced with the students as such.
- The steps described above, together with steps # 26 and 27, can also be summarized on a worksheet with the title “reading strategies”.