

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**

**LITERAL** - 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, what, when,** and **where** questions.

### **Level Two**

**INTERPRETIVE** - 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.

### ***Five Thinking Strategies of Good Readers***

1. **Predict: Make educated guesses.** Good readers make predictions about thoughts, events, outcomes, and conclusions. As you read, your predictions are confirmed or denied. If they prove invalid, you make new predictions. This constant process helps you become involved with the author's thinking and helps you learn.

2. **Picture: Form images.** For good readers, the words and the ideas on the page trigger mental images that relate directly or indirectly to the material. Images are like movies in your head, and they increase your understanding of what you read.
3. **Relate: Draw comparisons.** When you relate your existing knowledge to the new information in the text, you are embellishing the material and making it part of your framework of ideas. A phrase or a situation may remind you of a personal experience or something that you read or saw in a film. Such related experiences help you digest the new material.
4. **Monitor: Check understanding.** Monitor your ongoing comprehension to test your understanding of the material. Keep an internal summary or synthesis of the information as it is presented and how it relates to the overall message. Your summary will build with each new detail, and as long as the message is consistent, you will continue to form ideas. If, however, certain information seems confusing or erroneous, you should stop and seek a solution to the problem. You must monitor and supervise your own comprehension. Good readers seek to resolve difficulties when they occur; they do not keep reading when they are confused.
5. **Correct gaps in understanding.** Do not accept gaps in your reading comprehension. They may signal a failure to understand a word or a sentence. Stop and resolve the problem. Seek solutions, not confusion. This may mean rereading a sentence or looking back at a previous page for clarification. If an unknown word is causing confusion, the definition may emerge through further reading. When good readers experience gaps in comprehension, they do not perceive themselves as failures; instead, they reanalyze the task to achieve better understanding.

## **HOW TO STRENGTHEN YOUR READING COMPREHENSION**

1. **Analyze the time and place in which you are reading** - If you've been reading or studying for several hours, mental fatigue may be the source of the problem. If you are reading in a place with distractions or interruptions, you may not be able to understand what you're reading.
2. **Rephrase each paragraph in your own words** - You might need to approach complicated material sentence by sentence, expressing each in your own words.
3. **Read aloud sentences or sections that are particularly difficult** - Reading out loud sometimes makes complicated material easier to understand.
4. **Reread difficult or complicated sections** - At times, in fact, several readings are appropriate and necessary.
5. **Slow down your reading rate** - On occasion, simply reading more slowly and carefully will provide you with the needed boost in comprehension.
6. **Turn headings into questions** - Refer to these questions frequently and jot down or underline answers.
7. **Write a brief outline of major points** - This will help you see the overall organization and progression of ideas.
8. **Highlight key ideas** - After you've read a section, go back and think about and highlight what is important. Highlighting forces you to sort out what is important, and this sorting process builds comprehension and recall.
9. **Write notes in the margins** - Explain or rephrase difficult or complicated ideas or sections.

10. **Determine whether you lack background knowledge** - Comprehension is difficult, at times, and it is impossible, if you lack essential information that the writer assumes you have.

Suppose you are reading a section of a political science text in which the author describes implications of the balance of power in the Third World. If you do not understand the concept of balance of power, your comprehension will break down. When you lack background information, take immediate steps to correct the problem:

- Consult other sections of your text, using the glossary and index.
- Obtain more basic text that reviews fundamental principles and concepts.
- Consult reference materials.
- Ask your instructor to recommend additional sources or review texts.