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# Active Reading = Engaged Learning

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“We learn by example and by direct experience because there are real limits to the adequacy of verbal instruction.”

--Malcolm Gladwell, *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*, 2005

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## The Teacher's Role: A Guide on the Side (Not the Sage on the Stage)

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1. Instructor **creates the context** in which to **facilitate student learning**.
2. **Don't dump the lectures**, but encourage big-picture understanding, rather than memorization.
3. Active reading strategies **provide a scaffold** by which students can
  - a. build on concepts, and
  - b. connect to prior knowledge
4. Active reading and engaged learning activities must be **tied to a grade**. Students' focus is doing well in the class; help them see how the learning itself has value.

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## The Student's Role: Learn to Learn

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Active reading strategies help you **hold students accountable** for the material;

- a. they become the *content experts*, and
- b. they demonstrate improved *mastery of the content*,
- c. as they *learn to learn*.

Students have better retention through **peer-to-peer discussion** and guided analysis. Consider combining active reading with **student-led learning activities** for a “*teach it to learn it*” approach; the **text is a resource** for students as “experts,” not a crutch for ill-prepared learners. Some possible activities include:

- Student-led discussions or debates
- Student-created study guides or review sessions
- Small-group presentations or poster showcases

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# *Active Reading in Content Areas*

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## **Readings Related to Content**

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- History: textbooks, readers, monographs, memoirs, and novels
- Biology: textbooks, lab reports, and scientific journal articles
- Political Science: textbooks, readers, primary documents, and editorials
- Math: textbooks, journal articles, research articles, and historical documents

## **Assessment Activities**

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- Seminars
  - Discussions (online or live)
    - Have student-led discussions that require them to become the content expert, while the instructor facilitates the learning process.
  - Study Guides
    - Have students take quizzes on the reading assignments using study guide questions, thereby holding students accountable for the reading.
  - Group Presentations
    - Have students teach each other about the content presented in readings. The best way to learn is to teach.
- Labs
  - Worksheet/Activity
    - Have students complete a pre-lab worksheet as homework to prepare for an in class activity/game/discussion.
  - Study Guides
    - Have students use the study guides to prepare for a Roundtable Discussion facilitated by the instructor.
  - Poster Session
    - Have students create a poster based on their reading assignments. Host a poster session where students present their posters to each other or the school.
- Formal Writings
  - Book Reviews
    - Have students write a book review as a content expert.
  - Reflection Essays
    - Have students reflect on the material presented in the textbooks (maybe even have them compare the textbook to lecture material).
- Debates
  - Online/Live
    - Have students engage in a debates using content appropriate readings