

More Reading Leads to Better Writing

How does reading help students?

1. It improves and reinforces vocabulary development.
2. It exposes students to multiple text types/models.
3. It expands and deepens their subject knowledge.
4. It gives them an opportunity to comprehend a topic at their own pace.

The Reading -Writing Connection

As teachers, we want our students to expand their language skills so that they can become better communicators in their chosen disciplines. Reading is vital to this growth and has been found to have a reciprocal relationship with writing. It is generally agreed that the development of good reading habits and skills improve students' ability to write. In fact, reading within a discipline helps students to write professionally in their field. As Leki (1993) put it, "biology professors learn to write articles the way biology professors do by reading articles that biology professors have written" (p. 10).

Students' reading and writing skills, developed in their first language, are generally transferable to their second language. However, the transfer is not always automatic; guided activities and discussions are needed to transfer and further develop these skills. Below is a list of some of the key things a 'good reader' needs to do. Try to think about these things when giving your students reading activities.

Students need to

1. Have/find a purpose for reading
2. Identify the main ideas
3. Skim for gist
4. Scan for important information
5. Actively think about what the author is saying
6. Apply what they are reading to personal experience and knowledge.

The key is to get your students actively involved in the reading process. The following tips may help you to encourage and shape your students into good readers (and writers):

1. Stress the importance of reading, particularly voluntary reading, to your students.

University students often neglect reading for pleasure but "a growing body of evidence suggests that extensive reading – most notably, reading of a voluntary nature – may dramatically enhance . . . skills . . . related to comprehending and producing written text" (Ferris, 1998, p. 23)

2. Offer students some **selection** in course readings or have students find further readings on topics covered in the course.