

The background of the cover is a dark, abstract composition. It features a central vertical axis from which multiple rays of light emanate. The upper half of the cover is dominated by green rays, while the lower half features a mix of red and orange rays. The rays are arranged in a symmetrical, fan-like pattern, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall effect is reminiscent of a stylized sunburst or a complex geometric design.

EFFICIENT AND FLEXIBLE READING

Third Edition

Kathleen T. McWhorter



Efficient and Flexible Reading

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Kathleen T. McWhorter

Niagara County Community College

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Preface

The reading demands of college students are wide and diverse. Textbooks, the student's primary reading material, represent unique academic disciplines. Each differs in style, content, and conceptual complexity. Many students are also required to read literature, supplementary assignments, reference materials, periodicals, manuals, handbooks, and study guides.

Each of these materials is also unique, and more importantly, the student's purpose for reading each is different: a student may read to prepare for a class lecture, make notes for a discussion, review for an exam, or locate information for a paper. To handle these diverse reading situations effectively, a student must develop reading flexibility skills, adjusting strategies and techniques to suit each reading situation.

College students face rigorous course requirements and must cope with time restraints created by jobs, family, and social activities. Reading and study must be accomplished within a realistic time frame and result in effective learning. Reading efficiency, then, is also vitally important. This text is designed to enable students to become efficient and flexible readers capable of meeting the challenging demands of college.

PURPOSE

The primary purpose of this text is to present techniques and guided practice that will enable the reader to accomplish reading tasks within an efficient and realistic framework. It will guide students in developing reading flexibility—adjusting both comprehension and rate to suit purpose, the type and complexity of the material, and degree of familiarity. A second, more specific purpose of the text is to encourage students to develop successful active reading strategies. The text focuses on the development of vocabulary, comprehension, study-reading, and critical analysis techniques to enable students to interact with the material and learn more efficiently.

A third purpose of the text is to encourage students to approach reading as a thinking process. Metacomprehension—the student's awareness of and control over the reading process and its attendant thought processes—is emphasized.

CONTENT OVERVIEW

The text offers a blend of reading comprehension, retention, vocabulary development, critical reading, and rate building techniques that have proven essential for college students. Unit One presents the organization and framework for the text, developing and explaining the concepts and principles of efficiency and flexibility, and emphasizing reading as a thinking process. Strategies for active reading are presented and concentration and retention techniques are described. Unit Two details specific techniques for improving reading rate and flexibility, including skimming, scanning, and techniques for reading faster. Unit Three presents methods for improving comprehension skills through knowledge and use of text structure. The structure of paragraphs and the organization of ideas into thought patterns are described. Textbook reading strategies are presented including learning aids, graphics, and scientific/technical material. The structure of expressive writing, including articles and essays, short stories, and poetry, is discussed. Writing to learn strategies that use structure as a point of departure are emphasized.

Unit Four is concerned with vocabulary—an aspect of reading that affects both rate and comprehension. Various means of vocabulary expansion are suggested and aids to vocabulary development are presented, including contextual aids, word parts, and working with analogies. The final section focuses on critical reading skills. Skills in making inferences, distinguishing fact and opinion, identifying the author's purpose, understanding tone, recognizing generalizations, and identifying bias are included. Techniques for evaluating arguments and persuasive writing are emphasized and include evaluating sources, recognizing types of evidence, identifying reasoning errors, and evaluating nonlogical appeals.

Each chapter is organized as follows:

- chapter objectives
- context and purpose for learning the skill
- instruction and demonstration
- guided practice using short in-chapter exercises
- chapter application exercises
- chapter summary
- two reading selections with questions

The units are designed to be interchangeable, allowing the instructor to organize the course to suit his or her preferred skill sequence and to accommodate the particular needs of each class.

FEATURES

The following features enhance the text's effectiveness for both instructor and student:

Chapter Objectives

Each chapter begins with a brief list of objectives that establishes the chapter's focus and provides the students with purposes for reading. Objectives also serve as a means of checking retention after reading.

Comprehensive Skill Coverage

The text addresses each of four major skill areas: vocabulary, literal and critical comprehension, study-reading, and rate and flexibility. Individual chapters offer instruction, demonstration, and guided practice. Reading selections provide skill integration and application.

Reading Selections

Each chapter concludes with two reading selections, representative of the types of reading expected of college students. Included are numerous textbook excerpts, as well as articles and essays. These readings provide an opportunity for direct skill application as well as a means by which students can measure and evaluate their progress. The questions that follow each reading have been grouped into three levels: "Checking Your Comprehension" measuring literal and critical comprehension; "Interpreting and Evaluating" requiring critical reading skills; and "Questions for Discussion." Odd-numbered readings use a multiple-choice format; even numbered readings are open-ended questions suitable for writing or group activity.

Alternative Multiple-Choice Questions

The Appendix contains 15 sets of multiple choice questions for the 15 even-numbered reading selections. These are provided for instructors who prefer objective evaluation or for students working independently.

Conversion Chart

A words-per-minute conversion chart is included to enable students to compute their reading rate for each of the 30 reading selections.

Reading Progress Graph

The reading progress graph is a motivational feature that enables students to plot their comprehension and reading rate for each reading selection. It provides a visual representation of the students' progress and allows instructors to assess easily a student's level of proficiency and improvement.

Instructor's Manual

The Instructor's Manual provides numerous suggestions for using the text, including how to structure and organize the course and how to approach each section of the text. Chapter review quizzes and a set of transparency masters are included.

Computer Software

HarperCollins READ/WRITE, a software program for use on IBM and Macintosh computers accompanies the text. The program emphasizes thinking skills and includes sections on "Thinking Before Reading," "Thinking During Reading," and "Thinking After Reading." It also includes practice in underlining, skimming, critical reading, summarization, and vocabulary.

MAJOR CHANGES IN THE THIRD EDITION

The primary purpose of this revision is to strengthen the text's focus on literal and critical comprehension skills, to further emphasize active reading strategies, and to incorporate writing and critical thinking activities into the text. Specific changes include:

1. A new Chapter 2, "Strategies for Active Reading," that focuses on strategies for active reading, making predictions, and monitoring comprehension.
2. An increased emphasis on using text structure to aid comprehension and retention. Chapter 8, "Patterns: Relationships Among Ideas," has been expanded and conceptual maps for each pattern are included.
3. A new Chapter 10, "Reading Expressive Writing," that includes strategies for reading descriptive and figurative language and analyzing essays, short stories, and poetry.
4. A new Chapter 11, "Writing to Learn," that offers techniques for increasing retention and recall through underlining, annotating, paraphrasing, outlining, mapping, and summarizing.
5. A new section on understanding analogies in Unit 4, "Developing Your Word Efficiency."

6. A new Chapter 15, "Evaluating Arguments and Persuasive Writing," on reading and evaluating arguments and persuasive writing that includes types of evidence, errors in reasoning, and nonlogical appeals.
7. Sixteen new reading selections, that include timely and current topics such as euthanasia, stress management, career planning, and salary equity.
8. Questions for Discussion for each reading selection to provide an opportunity for reaction, interpretation, critical evaluation, and application. They may be used as writing activities or collaborative learning exercises.
9. Open-ended literal and critical reading questions for even-numbered reading selections that encourage writing, reaction, discussion, and student interaction.
10. Rapid reading drills that provide additional practice for rate improvement.
11. Summaries for each chapter to assist students in consolidating chapter content.

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Contents

Preface xi

Unit One: Getting Started 1

Chapter 1 Developing Your Efficiency and Flexibility 3

Analyzing Your Reading Efficiency 3

Developing Reading Flexibility 4

Principles of Efficiency and Flexibility 12

Evaluating Your Rate and Flexibility 13

Summary 15

READING SELECTION 1 “Touching—And Being Touched” 16

READING SELECTION 2 “The Functions and Effects of Music” 20

Chapter 2 Strategies for Active Reading 23

What Is Active Reading? 23

Prereading 25

Making Predictions and Connections 33

Developing Guide Questions 38

Monitoring Your Comprehension 40

Summary 45

READING SELECTION 3 “The New Civil Liberties Agenda” 46

READING SELECTION 4 “Student Suicides: The Dark Side of Higher Education” 49

Chapter 3 Techniques for Remembering What You Read 52

- Improving Your Concentration 52
- Using Review to Increase Recall 56
- Other Aids to Retention 57
- Systems for Remembering What You Read 62
- Summary 70
- READING SELECTION 5 "The Biosphere" 71
- READING SELECTION 6 "Nuclear Power Plants" 75

Unit Two: How to Increase Your Reading Rate and Flexibility 77

Chapter 4 Skimming: Reading for Main Ideas 79

- Purposes for Skimming 79
- How to Skim 80
- Using Skimming Effectively 86
- Skimming Various Types of Material 87
- Summary 99
- READING SELECTION 7 "Economic Growth and the Food Crisis" 100
- READING SELECTION 8 "Stress Management: Personally Adjusting to Stress" 103

Chapter 5 Scanning: Rapidly Locating Information 106

- How to Scan 107
- Scanning Particular Types of Materials 111
- Summary 123
- READING SELECTION 9 "Eye Language" 124
- READING SELECTION 10 "Your Brilliant Career" 127

Chapter 6 Techniques for Reading Faster 131

- Eye-Movement Patterns 131
- Reading in Meaning Clusters 134
- Key Word Reading 140
- Using Cue Words 147
- Rapid Reading Drills 148
- Pacing Techniques 155
- Rereading for Rate Increase 157
- Summary 158

READING SELECTION 11 “Child Abuse”	159
READING SELECTION 12 “Just Walk on By: A Black Man Ponders His Power to Alter Public Space”	162

Unit Three: Using Text Structure to Improve Your Comprehension 165

Chapter 7 Paragraph Structure 167

Identifying the Topic	168
Finding the Main Idea	171
Developing Expectations as You Read	180
Major and Minor Supporting Details	182
Types of Supporting Details	185
Summary	189
READING SELECTION 13 “The Appreciation of Humor”	190
READING SELECTION 14 “The Practicality of the Liberal Arts Major”	193

Chapter 8 Patterns: Relationships Among Ideas 196

How Recognizing a Pattern Improves Recall	197
Common Organizational Patterns	198
Summary	216
READING SELECTION 15 “Who’s Afraid of Math, and Why?”	218
READING SELECTION 16 “Distancing the Homeless”	221

Chapter 9 Techniques for Reading Textbooks 224

The Organization of Textbook Chapters	224
Textbook Learning Aids	228
Reading Graphics	230
Reading Scientific/Technical Material	236
Summary	247
READING SELECTION 17 “Astrophysics”	248
READING SELECTION 18 “The Problems of Developing Nations”	252

Chapter 10 Reading Expressive Writing 256

Understanding Descriptive and Figurative Language	256
Reading Narrative and Descriptive Essays	262
Reading Short Stories	269

Reading and Analyzing Poetry	278
Summary	282
READING SELECTION 19 "A Veiled Threat"	283
READING SELECTION 20 "The Use of Force"	286

Chapter 11 Writing to Learn 289

Underlining Techniques	290
Annotating and Making Marginal Notations	297
Paraphrasing	300
Outlining	302
Mapping to Show Relationships	306
Summarizing Information	309
Summary	312
READING SELECTION 21 "Musical Sounds"	313
READING SELECTION 22 "Barriers to Effective Listening"	317

Unit Four: Developing Your Word Efficiency 321

Chapter 12 Strengthening Your Word Power 323

Expanding Your Vocabulary	324
Learn Multiple Word Meanings	326
Technical and Specialized Vocabulary	328
Denotative and Connotative Meanings	330
Working with Analogies	333
Summary	337
READING SELECTION 23 "Eight Ways to Flub a Job Hunt"	338
READING SELECTION 24 "Death to the Killers"	343

Chapter 13 Aids to Vocabulary Development 345

Using Contextual Aids	345
Analyzing Word Parts	355
Tools for Expanding Your Vocabulary	358
A System for Learning Unfamiliar Words	365
Summary	368
READING SELECTION 25 "Archaeological Sites"	369
READING SELECTION 26 "In Defense of Voluntary Euthanasia"	372

Unit Five: Interpreting and Evaluating What You Read 375

Chapter 14 Critical Reading Strategies 377

- Making Inferences 378
- Distinguishing Between Fact and Opinion 382
- Recognizing Generalizations 385
- Identifying Tone 387
- Identifying the Author's Purpose 389
- Identifying Bias 392
- Summary 393
- READING SELECTION 27 "Flirtation—The Signals of Attraction—
Deciphered" 395
- READING SELECTION 28 "Time Out" 400

Chapter 15 Evaluating Arguments and Persuasive Writing 403

- Evaluating Source and Authority 404
- Reading Arguments 406
- Evaluating Arguments 409
- Errors in Logical Reasoning 415
- Evaluating Emotional Appeals 417
- Summary 421
- READING SELECTION 29 "An Ugly New Footprint in the Sand" 422
- READING SELECTION 30 "Why Women Are Paid Less Than Men" 425

Appendix: Multiple-Choice Questions for Even-Numbered Reading Selections 429

Words-Per-Minute Conversion Chart 444

Reading Progress Graph 446

References 449

Credits 453

Index 455

Unit One:

Getting Started

The purpose of this unit is to help you get started reading better and faster. Before you learn specific techniques for increasing your reading rate and comprehension, it is important that you learn a little about reading efficiency and flexibility. You will need to know what is involved in each and how you can improve your skill levels.

Chapter 1 explains reading efficiency and flexibility and presents the basic principles that govern them. It also describes the factors that affect how well and how fast you read. Chapter 2 focuses on active reading strategies and presents four techniques that will give you a good start in becoming a more efficient reader. Chapter 3 introduces ways to increase your concentration and to use review after reading to improve your retention. Other retention aids are discussed and a systematic approach that emphasizes learning while reading is demonstrated.

Chapter 1:

Developing Your Efficiency and Flexibility

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN:

1. to analyze your reading efficiency and flexibility
2. to understand factors that affect rate and comprehension
3. the basic principles that govern efficiency and flexibility

You have heard about cars that are “fuel efficient.” They are cars that use fuel “efficiently” and conserve energy. An “efficient” secretary is one who does his or her job well and on time. Efficiency, then, suggests the ability to perform with the minimum amount of effort, expense, or waste.

Efficiency involves the effective use of time or resources to accomplish a specific task. As you begin to think more about the concept of efficiency, you may begin to realize that it is a major objective in our work- and time-oriented society. For example, a secretary who takes an hour to type a letter, a short-order cook who takes twenty-five minutes to prepare a cheeseburger, or a sales clerk who takes five minutes to package a purchase is not regarded as efficient.

ANALYZING YOUR READING EFFICIENCY

As a college student, numerous and heavy demands are placed on your time. Your course work, which includes reading textbook chapters, completing assignments, studying for exams, and writing papers, competes with part-time jobs and social, recreational, and housekeeping tasks. Each demands your valuable time. At times, college may seem like a balancing or juggling act in which you are trying to do many things at once and do all of them well. You are probably wondering if you will be able to keep up and how to get everything done. One of the best ways to handle the demands and pressures of college life is to become more efficient—to get more done in less time.

Many students think that the only way to become more efficient is to read faster. They believe that slow reading is poor reading. This is not the case. *How* you read is more important than *how fast* you read. If you read a twelve-page

assignment in one hour but remember only 60 percent of what you read, you are not reading efficiently. You can see, then, that efficient reading involves adequate comprehension and recall within a reasonable time frame. Your reading efficiency will increase as you develop techniques that improve your comprehension and retention. These in turn will enable you to use your time most economically.

Here are a few questions that will help you assess whether you are an efficient reader. Answer yes or no to each in the space provided. Be honest with yourself!

1. Do you set goals and time limits for yourself at the beginning of each reading-study session? _____
2. Do you have particular questions in mind as you begin to read an assignment? _____
3. Do you spend a few minutes looking over an assignment before you begin reading it? _____
4. When reading, do you try to predict or anticipate what the writer will say next? _____
5. When you finish reading an assignment, do you take a few minutes to review what you have read? _____
6. Are you on the alert for words and phrases that signal change or continuation in thought? _____
7. Do you sort out more and less important details as you read? _____
8. When you meet a word you do not know, do you try to determine its meaning from the way it is used in the sentence? _____
9. Do you regularly use underlining, summary notes, and marginal notations to identify important information? _____
10. When reading nontextbook material, do you try to determine the author's purpose for writing? _____

If you answered yes to all or most of the above questions, you are well on your way to becoming an efficient reader. If, however, you answered no to some or many of the questions, then you need to improve your efficiency.

In this chapter we discuss how you can become a more efficient and flexible reader by varying your reading techniques to suit the material and your purpose for reading it. Then, as you proceed through the rest of the text, you will learn more specific approaches.

DEVELOPING READING FLEXIBILITY

Do you read the newspaper in the same way and at the same speed that you read a chemistry textbook? Do you read poetry in the same way and at the same speed that you read an article in *Time* magazine? Surprisingly, for many adults the answer to these questions is yes. Many adults, and this includes college graduates, read everything in nearly the same way at the same rate.