SECOND EDITION

READING AND LEARNING ACROSS THE DISCIPLINES

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Reading and Learning Across the Disciplines

To the Instructor

Reading and Learning Across the Disciplines, Second Edition, is part of a series of books that brings a whole-language approach to the teaching of reading, writing, and thinking skills, as well as a developmental approach to the instruction of students. Central to the writing of these textbooks is our belief that meaning is constructed by the reader or listener, and that literacy skills should be learned within a meaningful context. The emphasis is on developing reading ability and metacognitive skills within a knowledge domain. Robert Kegan's theory of constructive developmentalism (outlined in his 1982 book, *The Evolving Self*) complements such an integrated theory of comprehension. His theory assumes that at different stages people have different ways of constructing meaning in their lives, and that this qualitatively affects how they view themselves, others, school, and instruction. His ideas are useful in interpreting student responses to reading tasks.

The books in the *Academic Connections* series have three major objectives: (1) to teach reading and study skills within an integrated language framework; (2) to encourage more active and democratic interaction between instructors and learners; and (3) to underscore for students the connections among their personal, social, and academic lives. The books can be used in sequence or independently.

The emphasis in *Reading and Learning Across the Disciplines* is on developing academic reading and study skills within a knowledge domain. The purpose of the text is to acquaint students with text materials similar to those they will encounter in their courses, provide them with a number of strategic options for dealing with these materials, develop necessary background knowledge, and encourage them to develop individual, unique approaches to study tasks.

How is the text organized?

Because we view reading and studying as personal processes to which students bring individual experiences and learning preferences, this text offers a flexible approach to both. Unlike most study skills texts, *Reading* and Learning Across the Disciplines is organized around rhetorical structures rather than study skills. It emphasizes the intimate relationship among the author's content, purpose, and style, and offers the student a variety of ways to approach the reading selections. Because each rhetorical structure organizes knowledge in a particular way, the structure influences how that knowledge should be analyzed. Consequently, rather than offer one comprehensive reading and study approach, this text encourages students to vary their learning strategies as the readings dictate. The uniqueness of this text lies in the fact that it is content- or subject-driven rather than skills-driven. The skills emanate from the readings rather than being superimposed upon them. Students are encouraged to apply these skills and strategies to their own academic materials, and to adapt them as necessary to their learning preferences.

The book is divided into four parts, and each of the chapters within the four parts are unified around a specific knowledge domain.

Part I contains five chapters that present the basic skills necessary for monitoring reading and study activities. In addition, the chapters attempt to empower students with an increased awareness of their own individual strengths and weaknesses.

Each of the five chapters in Part II focuses on a particular rhetorical structure. Strategies for using these structures to improve reading comprehension and to facilitate the organization and retention of information are presented within a particular academic discipline. Readings include selections from both textbooks and current periodicals.

Part III consists of two lengthy chapters involving critical thinking skills. Its goal is to challenge students to examine the nature of truth in order to form rational, logical opinions.

Part IV is designed as a chapter-by-chapter review of all the skills presented in the text. It offers additional reading and study skills activities and worksheets on which to practice the reading and study skills.

How is each chapter organized?

Although content and skills vary from chapter to chapter, organization within each chapter is consistent. Each chapter begins with a brief statement of objectives and a chapter outline and checklist. These sections enable instructors to plan and schedule the readings and activities within each chapter. These are previewing and prereading devices as well as time-management aids.

The key concepts and definitions of the chapter are then presented, followed by a warm-up activity and in many cases by brief readings and exercises as well.

The major portion of each chapter consists of a series of two or three readings. Each reading selection is preceded by a prereading activity and followed by a comprehension check that draws on the concepts and skills of the chapter and the content of the reading. Additional comprehension exercises are often included as well.

Each chapter concludes with one or two applications in which students are required to apply the skills to another academic course. In addition, a journal writing activity requires students to synthesize the concepts presented in the readings throughout the chapter and to organize them in the form of an essay.

What's new in the second edition?

In each chapter you will find:

- additional exercises for practice and reinforcement of skills
- new readings to allow for variation in student ability
- additional questions for journal writing and discussion

Chapter 3 on the main idea has been extensively revised and includes exercises on:

- finding topic sentences
- finding the implied main idea
- locating supporting details
- finding the main idea of longer passages

A new Part IV now includes:

- an additional thematic reading for each chapter
- additional skills exercises for review and application

Instructor's manual

The organization of *Reading and Learning Across the Disciplines* is somewhat organic; that is, it is an outgrowth of a particular model developed by the authors. However, because we believe that the instructor, not the text, should dictate the content of the course, we have included a comprehensive Instructor's Manual that will enable you to customize your use of the text to suit your course needs and teaching style.

The manual includes:

- a suggested syllabus for planning coverage of topics
- chapter-by-chapter suggestions for in-class and outside activities and assignments
- additional skills exercises, which may be photocopied
- overhead transparency masters for particular exercises
- additional writing assignments and projects

In developing this and the other texts in the *Academic Connections Series*, we have tried to bridge the gap between the integrated and separate skills approaches. We hope that you will respond favorably to our endeavor. We welcome your comments and suggestions and hope that you will respond with your own experiences, so that together we may develop a model that will most effectively enhance student learning.

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To the Student

If you have ever tried to put together the pieces of a picture puzzle, you know that your task is much easier if you have an idea of how the puzzle will look when it is finished. For this reason most people start to work on a puzzle by looking at the picture on the box. Next, they locate the straight-edged pieces and fit them together to form the outside frame of the picture. Once they have created the frame of the puzzle, they begin to work on the inside, referring to the picture from time to time to help them figure out where the pieces belong.

Likewise, when you try to read a written selection that requires you to organize and analyze facts, you find it much easier if you have a clear idea of how the author arranged those facts. Once you grasp the overall structure, you have a framework similar to the picture on the puzzle box, which helps you make meaning out of the words on the page.

You can develop a framework for reading:

- by creating a context that activates prior knowledge
- by becoming aware of how you function as a reader and learning to monitor your comprehension as you read
- by learning to identify and utilize the structures by which authors commonly organize their writing

How will *Reading and Learning Across the Disciplines*, Second Edition, help you develop a framework for reading and studying?

Part I, "The Foundations," will teach you to activate knowledge before reading in order to create context, enhance comprehension, and use context to unlock meaning as you read. It will also help you to understand your own learning style and adjust your reading and study strategies accordingly. Furthermore, it will sharpen your listening skills and supply you with a strategy for structuring lecture notes.

Part II, "Structures and Strategies," will teach you to identify and use the common structures by which writers organize their material. You will learn to use these structures to enhance comprehension, to take notes as you read, to become a better test-taker, and to improve your writing skills.

Part III, "Critical Thinking and Research," challenges you to move beyond the literal level of comprehension to a level wherein you are able to analyze and evaluate what you read with a critical eye.

Part IV, "Additional Readings for Review," gives you an opportunity to test your mastery of the skills learned in Parts I, II, and III.

Each chapter of the text includes a warm-up activity, skills exercises, a number of reading selections, reading comprehension checks, skills applications, and a section entitled "Going Beyond" in which you will have an opportunity to verbalize in writing what you have learned in the chapter. By "going beyond" you will be challenged to clarify and synthesize what you have learned in order to truly "make it your own."



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Activating Knowledge to
Create Context

CHAPTER 3
Understanding Yourself
as a Learner

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Understanding Yourself
as a Reader

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