How to Help Learners Remember What They Read

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Learners sometimes complain that they don't remember what they read. When asked about reading practices they often recounted that they would get to the bottom of a page of text and realize they had no clue about what they had just read. Here is a strategy that uses Post-It Notes.to address this issue.

Talking Back to the Text With Post-it Notes

Use Post-it Notes with prompts prior to the reading, after skimming the assigned pages, and after the reading has been finished. The assignment is to simply complete each prompt on a single Post-it. In these prompts, the learners address the text directly—by calling it "you"—as though they were having a conversation with it. Sample prompts include:

To be completed before reading for prediction and preview:

- I think you'll be telling me...
- I already know things about you, so I predict...

To be completed after briefly skimming the assigned pages:

- What does the heading for this section suggest about what will come?
- What does this picture (graph, diagram, etc.) suggest about this reading topic?

To be completed during reading as a response to what is read:

- This gives me an idea for...
- I want to know more about...
- This is not what I expected, which was...
- This information could be useful to me because I'm interested in...
- I think this will be on the test because...

Why This Works

The benefits of reading with an explicit plan for engagement, comprehension, and memory include greater class comfort and participation, greater understanding of what is read, increased memory of the text, and a reduction in the amount of rereading or review needed for test time.

The use of Post-its increases memory pattern linkages, understanding, and the pleasure of reading. As learners become more skilled readers through strategies that promote pattern seeking and linking, they build their independent skills about how to think actively about the text.

Source: Edutopia ↗