

Reading for Thinking - Glossary of Terms

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Acceptable bias Bias that appears in writing with a clearly persuasive intent and is backed up by supporting evidence, yet acknowledges opposing points of view with respect.

Addition or continuation transitions

These transitions do not contradict what came before but continue the same train of thought that was introduced in the previous sentence. Words and phrase like *first, second, for example, in several studies, and more precisely* are all considered addition or continuation transitions.

Allusions Allusions are references making comparisons to people, events, or places that call up in the minds of listeners or readers a set of associations that help explain an idea.

Analysis The ability to see and understand how different ideas in a text relate not just to one another but also to the ideas of other writers.

Antecedent Nouns and noun phrases to which pronouns refer, "The *division of power in a marriage* is a major source of strife between married couples. Yet *it* is very infrequently discussed."

Antonyms Words opposite in meaning, e.g. *superior* and *subordinate*.

Approximate meaning Meaning of a word that doesn't match the dictionary definition but comes close enough to let readers continue without looking the word up.

Argument Stating an opinion along with relevant supporting details that function as evidence for a specific point of view, **Opinion**: "Mortgage documents should be written in readable language that the mortgagee can understand on a first reading." **First Reason**: "Had mortgage documents been more readable, it's possible that the 2008 economic catastrophe might have been if not averted, but at least diminished. Many of those who signed mortgages with adjustable rates did not understand how rapidly those rates could increase."

Attribution Crediting a work to a particular author or artist.

Bandwagon appeal When an author employs the bandwagon appeal, he or she tells readers to believe what's being said because everyone else does, "Really, you have to get on Facebook to promote yourself professionally. **Except for you and two other people, the entire world is on Facebook.**"

Bias Bias in writing reveals the author's personal inclination to support or criticize a particular idea or event. **Negative Bias**: "And somehow, against all common sense, we are expected to believe the claim that midwives were ever a safe substitute for medical doctors." **Positive Bias**: "Although up until the turn of the century, midwives did a fine job delivering healthy babies, medical doctors, once they were professionally organized saw to it that midwives were deprived of the right to deliver babies at their home."

Bridging inferences Inferences readers draw to understand how supporting details relate to one another and contribute to the main idea.

Cause and effect pattern Authors use this pattern of organization in a paragraph to explain how one event (the cause) produces another event (the effect).

Chains of repetition and reference Writers create chains of repetition and reference to make sure words central to their meaning stay in the forefront of the reader's mind. Chains of repetition and reference consist of pronouns, category word substitutes, synonyms, and associated words and phrases to help the reader follow the thematic progression of their thought.

Circular reasoning Writers who employ circular reasoning offer an opinion, but instead of offering reasons for that opinion, the author merely repeats it in different words, for example: "You should really consider buying a Hyundai. You should buy one because they are really good cars."

Classification pattern Readings relying on the classification pattern of organization describe how some larger group can be broken down into subgroups, each with its own set of specific characteristics.

Comparison and contrast pattern Readings that rely on the comparison (cite similarities) and contrast (cite differences) pattern of organization highlight the similarities or differences between two topics. Sometimes authors who use this pattern do both; they point out the similarities and the differences between two topics.

Connectives Linking words that function as transitions and help tie parts of sentences

or whole sentences together by identifying their relationships. In paragraphs dealing with cause and effect, you are likely to see connectives such as *because*, *as*, and *since* used to introduce a cause (or causes) and the conjunction *so* to introduce an effect (or effects).

Connotative language The language that implies a personal value judgment, positive or negative, "The lawyer explained the consequences in *tedious and excruciating detail*."

Context The context is the sentence or passage in which a word appears, and it often provides a clue or clues to word meaning.

Context clues Four of the most common context clues are *contrast*, *restatement*, *example*, and *general knowledge*.

Contrast clues Context clues that tell you what an unfamiliar word does *not* mean, often in the form of antonyms, "Reticent among strangers, she was *outspoken and outgoing with family and friends*."

Coordinate statements In outlining, ideas that are equal in importance.

Definition pattern This organizational pattern usually begins with the word being defined. Typically, that word is highlighted with boldface or italics, and the definition follows right after the word's first appearance.

Denotative language Language that suggests little more than a word's dictionary definition and packs no emotional punch, e.g. *The table was made of pine*.

Example clues Context clues in which the author supplies an example or illustration of an unfamiliar word, "The little dog was

remarkably tenacious in a fight; **he would not give up even with opponents much bigger than he.**"

Irrelevant reasons Facts that are not related to an opinion being discussed. **Opinion:** "The ownership of pit bulls should not be subjected to special restrictions. **Irrelevant Fact:** During the nineteenth century, pit bulls were one of the most popular family pets. "

Facts Statements of fact provide information about people, places, events, and ideas. Facts can always be verified for accuracy from outside sources. "When it comes to using dogs for bomb detection, the American military relies most heavily on Labrador retrievers. "

Fallacy of tacit agreement Error in logic which argues that the absence of voiced opposition is the same as agreement.

Figurative language Language that makes sense in the imagination while seeming nonsensical in reality, e.g. "My head was spinning from all the new information I had been given."

Flexible readers Because they know that one reading strategy does not suit all texts, flexible readers are always ready to try something different if their first approach doesn't produce results.

General academic vocabulary This kind of language is more commonly used in an academic setting and less frequently used in casual conversation. *Cognitive*, *subsequent*, and *fortuitous* would all be examples of academic language most typically found in classroom lectures, scholarly journals, and textbooks or reference works.

General knowledge clues Context clues in which readers base their inference solely

on their familiarity with the experience or situation described in the reading passage.

Generalizations Broad statements that summarize a number of different but related events. "Our planet is entering into a state of permanent environmental crisis."

Hasty generalizations Broad general statements based on only one or two examples are considered "hasty," for example, "Our planet is entering into a state of permanent environmental crisis. Last winter we had twice the normal amount of snow and the summer was plagued by drought."

Imply To suggest without stating directly.

Implied main idea The implied main idea of a reading is suggested but not directly stated.

Independent and subordinate statements In outlining, if one phrase is indented beneath another, then the top one is **independent**, or more important, while the indented item is **dependent**, or not equal to the statement above it.

Infer To figure out or read between the lines in order to determine what the author suggested by did not say directly.

Introductory sentence The introductory sentence paves the way for the topic sentence expressing the real main idea. It offers some background knowledge about the topic sentence but is not developed in the paragraph.

Inappropriate Expert An expert from a field not related to the topic is cited as evidence by the author.

Inferring a topic Writers rely on readers to infer a topic when the subject under discussion is not something concrete that

can be seen or touched. They rely on their readers to spot words similar or related in meaning and come up with a word or phrase that sums up all of those various references.

Inferences Inferences are the conclusions a reader draws about ideas that are implied in a text but not directly stated.

Logical inferences rely more heavily on the author's actual words and don't over-rely on personal experience.

Illogical inferences are conclusions based more on the reader's personal experience than on the author's words.

Informed opinions Opinions that are backed by relevant reasons, facts, studies, and examples are informed and are therefore worthy of serious consideration.

Uninformed opinions are opinions lacking sufficient or supporting details.

Informative writing Informative writing describes events or ideas without including personal judgments by the author.

Irony The practice of saying one thing while implying exactly the opposite; also the opposite of what was expected or intended, for instance "There are those who insist we have to acknowledge that women are also guilty of domestic violence. And, of course, they are right. Women's violence against men is a huge social issue. Men are understandably terrified by creatures who are smaller than they are, possessed of much less muscle mass, and skilled at throwing punches."

Main idea The main idea is the central point or message of a passage or reading. The main idea is the thought that unifies or connects all the sentences in the reading. Sometimes it is expressed in a sentence. Sometimes it's not.

Major supporting details Example, reasons, studies, statistics, facts, and figures, etc., that are essential to explaining the main idea and making it convincing.

Metaphor Makes an implied comparison that reveals a hidden similarity between two very different things without using the words *like* or *as*. "She had an **elfin** smile that **lit up** her face."

Minor supporting details These details are the most specific sentences in the paragraph. They further clarify the major details that might not be completely understood on their own. They can be essential or nonessential to the paragraph, depending on their context.

Opinions Statements of opinion cannot be checked for accuracy with outside sources because they reflect the writer's point of view about the subject under discussion and are shaped by the author's personal experience, training, and background, "Chris Brown may have the character of a thug, but the man can dance."

Paraphrasing Paraphrasing translates an author's ideas into someone else's words without altering or changing the original meaning. An *inaccurate paraphrase* alters an author's meaning along with the words.

Personal Character Attacks When writers don't know how to respond to opposing points of view, they sometimes attack the other person's character and background. "Why would anyone listen to Naomi Judd's political opinions? The woman has acknowledged that she has been treated for depression."

Personal conclusions Inferences that follow from the reading but were not necessarily intended by the author.

Persuasive writing Writers intent on persuasion express a personal point of view on an issue and try to get their readers to share their opinion, "Adjunct instructors need to form a union in order to demand and get a living wage."

Playing on the reader's emotions Unable to build a strong argument, the author uses standard symbols, allusions, and imagery to evoke a purely emotional response in the reader. "Like World War II, the war in Iraq made the world safe for Democracy."

Primary pattern Organizational pattern that links together the majority of the details introduced in the paragraph.

Process pattern Organizational pattern in a paragraph that orders events according to when they occurred and identifies the steps or stages necessary to explaining how something functions or works.

Purpose Refers to the author's goal or reason for writing. Writers whose primary purpose is to *inform*, i.e., give their readers information without including a personal point of view, are going to keep their tone neutral. Writers whose purpose is to *persuade* want to convince readers to share or at least consider their point of view and thus are very likely to infuse their tone with feeling.

Recall cues The use of information already stored in long-term memory to help call up or remember definitions of new words.

Relevant supporting facts Relevant supporting facts and reasons are clearly related to the opinion being discussed. *Irrelevant* supporting facts and reasons do not relate to the opinion under discussion, although they might be related to the topic stated.

Restatement clues Context clues in which writers deliberately say the same thing two different ways for clarity and emphasis, for instance, "Stock volatility, *or excessive swings in the market*, can't always be logically explained by supply and demand."

Reversal transitions Reversal transitions signal to the reader that the author is about to revise, challenge, modify, or flatly contradict what's just been said. They can be words, phrases or entire sentences that contain words such as *however*, *yet*, *in contrast*, and *on the contrary*. They are especially important following introductory sentences.

Sequence of dates and events pattern Dates and events in this organizational pattern are presented according to the order in which they occurred in the paragraph.

Similes Makes an explicit comparison using the words *like* or *as*, e.g. "I belonged in Idle Valley like a pearl onion on a banana split." Raymond Chandler, *The Long Goodbye*

Simple listing pattern All the major details in this organizational pattern are equally important and the order in which they occur doesn't matter.

Slippery slope thinking As support for an opinion, the writer claims that one event will set off a host of similar and even more disastrous events, "If a ban on assault weapons becomes the law of the land, the next thing you should expect is the demand for hunters to give up their hunting rifles."

Specialized vocabulary Vocabulary consisting of the words and terms essential to mastering specific academic subjects.

SQ3R SQ3R is a study technique for reading and understanding textbooks. The letters stand for **Survey, Question, Read, Recall (also Recite), and Review.**

Statement of condition Authors who express a statement of condition assert that a specific situation or state of affairs exists or existed. Unlike statements of value and policy, statements of condition appear to be purely factual, but they also include opinion in the suggestion that someone or something is unlikely to be known to general readers and therefore requires supporting details meant to convince, for instance, "Most people don't realize that the family as we know it is a fairly recent invention."

Statement of policy opinions Authors who express a statement of policy opinion insist that a particular action should or should not be taken in response to an existing condition or situation, e.g., telling readers that something must be changed, improved, revised, or abandoned. Helping verbs *must*, *need*, and *should* appear frequently in statements of policy.

Statement of value opinions Authors who express a statement of value opinion strive to make their readers evaluate or assess the topic of their argument in the same way they do, e.g., telling readers an idea, activity, or object is worthless or priceless, logical or illogical, savvy or silly.

Statements of connection Explicit statements of condition are the writer's way of being considerate to readers by giving them the information that either tells them how two ideas are related or provides them with enough information to make a bridging inference possible.

Subjective Related from a personal point of view, reflecting the writer's or speaker's personal experience

Summary Summaries are abbreviated versions of longer reading, which should include only the main idea and the most important supporting details.

Summary sheets For particularly difficult texts, summary sheets reduce the original text to its bare bones, just including the three key elements of a text: topic, main idea, and two or three key details.

Supporting details Supporting details are the more specific sentences that develop, clarify, or prove an author's point. They anticipate and answer questions that readers might raise about the main idea.

Synthesizing In the process of synthesizing, readers pull ideas from different sources on the same subject and link them together into a new and original whole,

Synthesis statement An original idea that combines and reflects various points of view on a subject. Synthesis statements can reflect an informative or a persuasive purpose, for instance,
Informative: "When it comes to judging Harry Truman's decision to drop the atomic bomb, the historian Gar Alperovitz is in striking disagreement with biographers David McCullough and Alonzo Hamby, who accepted Truman's argument that he had no choice."
Persuasive: Unlike biographers David McCullough and Alonzo Hamby, who simply recycled Truman's own explanation for using the atomic bomb on innocent civilian, historian Gar Alperovitz convincingly argues that dropping the bomb was Truman's attempt to intimidate the Russians and one of the first shots in the Cold War.

Textbook template A textbook template is an explanatory pattern that turns up very frequently in textbooks. Those patterns can range from chapter sections that start

off with the thesis statement to chapter sections that start with a question posed in the heading, and answered by the thesis statement appearing in the first or second paragraph.

young age are more prone to violent behavior than are children who have not been exposed to video games early in their lives.

Thesis statement Stated main idea of a research paper, an essay, or longer reading.

Tone In the context of writing, *tone* refers to the feeling, emotion, or attitude toward both subject matter and audience that emerges from the writer's words.
Grammar, imagery, personal pronouns, references to the audience or self, and selection of details are all key components of tone.

Topic The topic of a paragraph is the subject the author chooses to discuss or explore. It's the person, place, or event most frequently mentioned or referred to in a passage or selection.

Topic sentences General sentences that sum up the paragraph's main idea and are further explained by almost all of the other sentences in the paragraph.

Transitions Transitions are verbal bridges that help readers move smoothly from one sentence to another. Transitions can be single words such as *moreover*, *therefore*, and *however*. They can also be entire sentences, e.g. "But the story didn't end there."

Unidentified experts No names are given for alleged expert opinions. "Experts all agree that copper bracelets can eliminate joint pain."

Unidentified research Studies are mentioned with no description of who conducted them, for instance, "Studies of violent video games all show that children who play the games, starting at a very