

ACTIVITY 3.3

Read the Label (The use of labels aids comprehension and retention)

From Bransford & Johnson, 1972

Concept

This exercise is intended to illustrate the importance of understanding what you are learning. Previewing the material will facilitate comprehension and organization for more effective retrieval. More generally, students should know that it is important to read, reread, and think about the learning material until it makes sense.

Instructions

This demonstration will take about 10 minutes. First, have students listen to the following paragraph:

The procedure is quite simple. First, you arrange items into different groups. Of course, one pile may be sufficient depending on how much there is to do. If you have to go somewhere else due to lack of facilities, that is the next step; otherwise, you are pretty well set. It is important not to overdo things. That is, it is better to do too few things at once than too many. In the short run this may not seem important, but complications can easily arise.

Once they have heard the paragraph, have them rate their comprehension of the paragraph, and then try to recall as much of it as possible. Comprehension and recall will be fairly low. Then, have half the class put their heads down. To the remaining students, show this label: WASHING LAUNDRY. Then have all students listen to the passage again. Test everyone again on comprehension and retention. Those given the label will generally understand and remember the information better. Highlight the need for students to read their chapter titles and summaries before they dive in to their textbooks. Previewing the material takes very little time and gives a significant boost to comprehension and retention.



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CONTENT
OUTLINE**

This demonstration highlights the fact that you should preview your course chapters before you start to read. Review the headings in the chapter and the questions at the end of the chapter before you begin.

See also

Klein, M. (1981). Context and memory. In L. T. Benjamin, Jr., & K. D. Lowman (Eds.), *Activities handbook for the teaching of psychology* (Vol. 1, p. 83). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Reference

Bransford, J. D., & Johnson, M. K. (1972). Contextual prerequisites for understanding: Some investigations of comprehension and recall. *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior*, 11, 717-726.