



Using Subtext Skills for Academic Success

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What are Subtext or Meta-cognitive Skills?

- **Sub means below; meta means situated behind.**
- ***Subtext skills* reflect knowledge of expectations without explicit (clearly articulated) information or directions.**

What are Concrete Skills?

- *Concrete skills* reflect knowledge of expectations based on what is articulated.
- They are important, but success in college means developing and using *subtext skills*.
- *Subtext skills* facilitate full understanding. They are enhanced critical thinking skills.

Syllabi

- Use *concrete skills* to track the date and content of each lecture; due dates for papers and dates of exams; and for ensuring you know the meaning of new words used on syllabi.
- Use *subtext skills* to ask the overarching question: “What is this course about and what am I expected to learn”. Then, apply your answers to more fully understand the content of each lecture and expectations of papers and other assignments.

English Courses, for example

Syllabi indicate required reading material (books, articles).

- *Subtext skills* focus on the content similarities and differences of reading assignments; facilitate comparisons and contrasts of themes and characters; promote greater understanding of what you are expected to learn.

Developing Subtext Skills

- **What** - by looking at syllabi and listening to professors, what content seems to drive the course?
- **When** - are expectations related to comparing time frames and historical periods?
- **How** - by solving a math problem, can you apply the same skill to another similar problem?

Developing, c'ont (2)

- Why - can you identify rationales for course emphasis and determine why they are important?
- Who - whether you are reading a novel, a history book, or science book, can you understand the significant roles played by individuals?

Developing, c'ont (3)

Put it all together

Novels

Who wrote it, when did the writer live, what is the storyline, for whom was it written, who are the characters, why did they behave a certain way, what is the underlying theme of the book?

Developing, c'ont (4)

Math

What am I trying to solve, what is the best way to solve it, how can I solve the problem better, what bodies of knowledge or tools do I need, how is the problem similar and different than others, why is solving the problem important, when was the problem introduced to the class, why was it introduced at that time?

Don't Overlook the Main Point(s)

- In a history course, don't just memorize dates. Understand why these these dates are significant in light of what happened and how these developments differ from previous and even future developments?
- You can always look up dates; you cannot always look up analyses of events. That will be your job.

Example of Overlooking Main Point

A daughter calls her parents to report that she had her baby last night.

Dad asks about the baby's health (important). Mom asks about resemblance. Dad asks when the daughter is leaving the hospital. Daughter responds that the baby is healthy, the baby looks like their side of the family, and mom and baby will be discharged tomorrow.

What important question was omitted?

Hint: Does this couple have a grandson or a granddaughter?

QUIZ!

- What was the subject of this presentation?
- Define the term “subtext skills”.
- Why are subtext skills important?
- How do these skills provide academic advantages?
- How will you apply these skills tomorrow?

*Silver and gold will vanish away,
but a good education will never decay.*