



Cracking the Reading Code Tutor Guide

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Cracking the Reading Code – Tutor guide

The resource

This resource consists of:

- eight video-clips which are designed to illustrate effective reading strategies
- a booklet 'Reading: A guide for reading non-fiction'

Each clip is tagged so that a person can browse for the most relevant clip and know how long it will run. This enables someone who doesn't enjoy reading to find out how skilful academic readers read – without having to read screeds of text. Once a person has the link, the resource is very easy to browse and comprehend. The clips are:

Peri's story

Peri says he "doesn't do reading". See him use the knowledge and skills he already has to learn how to read a textbook.

Duration: 6:03 minutes

Worried about reading?

Your reading history doesn't need to control your success. There are effective strategies you can learn and use to read academic texts well and grow your intelligence.

Duration: 2:06 minutes

7 step Poutama Model

The 7 step model for reading non-fiction is explained and demonstrated step by step.

Duration: 5:46 minutes

Maria's story

Maria uses her areas of strength to help her get meaning out of texts and combat stress.

Duration: 3:14 minutes

Peri's study tips

Peri shares the tips and strategies he uses to read non-fiction.

Duration: 1:59 minutes

Working with others

Hear about the ways that students benefit from interacting and learning with each other.

Duration: 1:44 minutes

What tutors can do

Ideas and strategies that tutors can use when introducing students to a new topic.

Duration: 1:22 minutes

Irlen Syndrome

Learn about Irlen Syndrome which is about sensitivity to light intensity. Many people who have trouble reading have Irlen.

Duration: 2:54 minutes

How to use the resource with students

- Give them the link and let them self-access. They will relate to the speakers and clearly see the strategies in action.
- You can show the clips 'Peri's story' and 'Maria's story' to engage and motivate students to attempt academic reading strategies. 'Peri's study tips' and 'Working with others' are good clips to encourage students to adopt helpful study strategies. 'Worried about reading' is a good clip to use to broach the issue of difficulties with academic reading. '7 step Poutama Model' demonstrates the material in the booklet so that students can get a 'reader's eye view' of how to use effective strategies to read academic texts. 'Irlen syndrome' is a good clip to show to students who experience discomfort while reading for extended periods of time.

How to use the resource yourself

- Browse and view the clips yourself to gain an understanding of how it feels to struggle with reading academic texts and watch effective reading strategies in action. The clip 'What tutors can do' is specifically designed to show a tutor modelling a range of effective practices which set the students up for success in reading an unfamiliar academic text.
- Read the 'Reading: A guide for reading non-fiction' booklet which covers the '7 Step Poutama model' clip in particular, and browse the references and links inside for ideas you can adapt in class.
- Read the *italicised synopses* for each clip that follow, and get together with a colleague to reflect on your own teaching practice with the aid of the prompt questions.
- Incorporate a new strategy into your class planning and see it work.

Synopses and discussion questions

Peri's story – cracking the reading code

Peri avoided reading but was suddenly faced with reading academic texts when he enrolled in the Bachelor of Nursing Māori.

"I'd got through life without reading...When I saw the textbooks in their plastic wrappers, I freaked out and thought 'I am not going to read these books'. I didn't open them for weeks. I didn't know how."

He came to see Clare, the Academic Advisor (Accessibility). Together they tapped into the idea of "taking a recce" which is something Peri knew really well already from his time in the army. When you take a recce you look around for features in the landscape for communications and access so he used his recce skills to help him get the big picture of the text. He went from "I won't read it" to "She made me feel like I was in control. She made it into segments. It allowed me to turn reading a book into MY language. I may never love

reading, but I feel confident. That's huge. I've invested so much time and money and family into this. I'm not going to drop out".

With good strategies, you can "do academic reading". And how can tutors inspire people to crack the reading code? "She didn't overpower me. She made me feel comfortable. She treated me with respect. She asked the right questions. I had to be totally honest within myself to answer with truth and that's why I've got the results I have today."

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. How do you draw out what the reader knows already?
2. How can this link to the reading task?
3. How can you help?

Worried about reading?

Everyone has a history. Many students with a history of poor reading feel discouraged.

Tutors don't often take the time to talk about reading – the different types of text, purposes for reading texts and the skills involved – so even confident non-fiction readers may lack confidence to tackle academic texts.

There is hope though! Intelligence is not fixed. You can grow your intelligence. Just because you had trouble in the past doesn't mean you are stuck there now.

Learning involves content, state and strategy.

- *Content is the stuff you have to learn.*
- *State is how you feel, and your emotional reaction can be positive or negative.*
- *Strategy is about how to learn stuff. Good strategies make reading easier.*

You can learn good strategies quite quickly so you can read well and grow your intelligence.

Questions for reflection and discussion

Conversations with students about reading are enormously helpful.

1. How do you find out the reader's history of reading?
2. What are the differences between the techniques of reading fiction and academic texts?
3. Dweck (1999) defines two mind-sets - 'fixed' where you believe that your talents and abilities are innate and unchangeable, and 'growth' or 'incremental' where you know that your talents and abilities (including intellectual ability) can be developed with effort. People with a 'fixed' mind-set avoid the risk of failure which could make them look less intelligent. People with a 'growth' mind-set thrive of the challenge of mastering a new skill. Explaining this to students who have been labelled as failures gives hope and produces measurable results. How does your belief as a tutor about whether intelligence is fixed or incremental affect the way that you encourage and equip students?

7 step Poutama model

This model presents 7 simple steps shown in 3 different ways. The booklet also has a collection of appendices so you can dip in and out as you need.

- *Step 1 – The Reading space - Think about “what works for me”, physical comfort, distractions. Be settled and curious.*
- *Step 2 – Stop and think – What am I reading this for? What do I already know? Pause.*
- *Step 3 – Title and key words –Essential to identify and understand as these are good clues to get the big picture. Talk it over in your group.*
- *Step 4 – Skim (a quick flick) – check headings, text features and graphics quickly to get an idea of the shape and usefulness of the text.*
- *Step 5 - Scan (a closer look) – hunt in more detail, zoom in on your target.*
- *Step 6 – A proper read – have a thorough, detailed and thoughtful read.*
- *Step 7 – Action - Pause and stocktake. If I want to remember what I read, I have to do something with it. Get a clear idea of the look of it first. Get the big picture. Know what you need to do with it before you start. Track it, summarise it in a way that is easy for you to remember.*

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. How could you implement these steps into engaging students with texts?
2. How could you encourage students to use these steps when they read?
3. What conditions can you manipulate to make the reading experience more successful for students?
4. How could you help students develop a personalised graphic organiser that captures the big picture of the text?

Maria’s story

Getting the information out of reading can be a slow and difficult process. Tap into what you already know and use your areas of strength.

Maria uses her skills and experience as a rugby player to understand new terms. She uses the rugby metaphor of “game plan” to understand “strategic initiative”. She uses her physical skills to reinforce the learning process by moving around and tossing a koosh ball back and forth to reinforce the steps of a process.

When you are faced with a stressful situation where you have to read a new text, Maria’s tips for handling stress are:

- *Take your time.*
- *Visualise the rugby field.*
- *Feel calm.*
- *Move around.*
- *Read it again.*
- *Respond.*

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. When students say they've sat and read for half an hour and nothing has gone in, what do you suggest?
2. What ways can you help students understand key terms and concepts in a way that works for them?
3. How do you find a metaphor that works for a student?
4. How do you link new information to what students know already?
5. How do you use a variety of ways to present a piece of information so students have more ways to remember significant information?
6. What ways can tutors give opportunities for students to get information off the page and out of the book?

Peri's study tips

Peri's top tips:

- *Find a place where I feel comfortable.*
- *Master that scary book.*
- *Read through chapters.*
- *Hunt the info.*
- *Use the headings and subheadings to find stuff.*
- *Summaries – check them out.*
- *Check the side paragraphs.*
- *Use the simple art of mind-mapping my way.*
- *Then I have a conversation with myself.*

Questions for reflection and discussion

How do you help student to find and develop their own effective strategies for study?

Working with others

Working with others is not cheating.

- *You learn much better in a group - especially shyer students.*
- *You gain confidence.*
- *You can practise your communication and expression skills.*
- *You all know a slightly different piece well and can contribute this to the group.*
- *As you argue and defend what you know, you become sure of it.*
- *It gives you multiple ways to express yourself and learn.*
- *Get a study group together early in your course.*

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. How do you encourage students to work together?
2. How do we structure group activities in class to build students' capabilities to work in a group where everyone participates?
3. How do we make sure that the objectives are clearly identified and met?

What tutors can do

When students are first learning to read academic texts:

- Give them the big picture.
- Show them how to find the key points.
- Explain the structure of the text – contents, chapters, headings, sub-headings, glossary, index, bold words, sidebars, graphics, abstracts, introductions, conclusions – and how these can help you find the information quickly and accurately.
- Pattern – get them to notice patterns in chapters or journal articles.
- Purpose – be clear on **why** they need to read this text.
- Tap into what students know already.
- Point out tricky words and where to find the glossary or make a glossary.
- Highlight key words.

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. What do you do to introduce a new text?
2. What do you do to get students to engage with a text on a new topic?
3. What do you do to scaffold students to read academic texts?
4. What do you do to help them review and remember information?

Irlen syndrome

People with Irlen are affected by the brightness of light.

The longer you read the harder it gets. Your head and eyes can become sore and reading feels really hard. Black text on a shiny white page is particularly hard. Some people see words shimmer and shift. Some find that words don't stay put on the page.

46% of people who have difficulty with reading have Irlen (Irlen, 2005). The problem with the brightness of light can be fixed with a bit of colour and/or adjusting the light in the environment.

A certified Irlen screener can do an initial screening. An Irlen diagnostician can do an Irlen diagnostic which identifies which colour has the most beneficial effect, and prescribe the correct lens tint. The result can be life-changing.

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. What do you do to manage the light intensity in the classroom?
2. Have you considered using a soft blue background when you use a data-show?
3. Have you considered turning off the lights nearest to a whiteboard to reduce glare?

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