

How to Get Your Students to do the Readings

Although we assume our adult learners to be self motivated, a common complaint of faculty is that they can't spend time in engaging activities with students because the students come to class unfamiliar with the material assigned in readings. There are many reasons why students don't do the reading (habitually, not because of a short term issue), including competing priorities for out of class time, no perceived need, or no perceived payoff in terms of utility (Nilson, 2010). Here are some strategies to engage students with the readings so they appreciate their value.

- Don't lecture from the readings. Class time should clarify, extend, and update the content by having students apply and examine it.
- Hold students accountable by using quizzes, in class problem solving, oral discussion sessions, requiring questions or other writing exercises based on the material. The best assignments require students to construct their own understanding of the reading.
- Articulate the structure, purpose, and value of the assigned readings. Giving them something to look for or a strategy for approaching the reading that directs their attention where you want it.
- Advise students to approach the reading by 1) scanning to make sense, 2) reviewing the purpose, 3) thinking while reading about the purpose, paraphrasing, and 4) reviewing the main points.
- Most of our students have well-developed study skills, but those who have not been learners in a while may need to be referred for academic enhancement to review signal words in readings and sharpening of highlighting skills.

Source: Nilson, L. B. (2010). Teaching at Its best: A research-based resource for college instructors (3rd. Ed.) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.