

## Why Students Don't Read: Strategies to increase student preparation for class

A “flipped” class requires students to read assigned materials and complete other assigned work that prepares them to apply new learning during in-class activities that promote deep learning of course content and skills. Instructors can assign readings, but what if students do not complete these readings before coming to class?

Hoelt (2012) reports that 56%-68% of students in a first-year class reported that they did not read assigned material before class. The most common reasons students give to explain why they did not read assigned materials are:

- They had too much to read.
- Their work schedule does not allow enough time for extensive reading.
- Their social life leaves little time for reading.

Students who say that they read the assigned materials usually said that they were motivated to complete reading assignments because they were **concerned about grades**.

Students who say that they did not complete assigned readings suggested that instructors might increase the number of students who read assigned material if they

- give **quizzes** on the assigned readings,
- assign **supplementary graded work** based on the readings to help them focus, and
- make the assigned readings **interesting**.

Hoelt tried each strategy in one of three different courses. She found that **reading quizzes** and **supplementary graded work** successfully motivated students to complete assigned reading (74% of students in a course that used reading quizzes; 95% of students in a course that used an assigned, graded reading journal). Although more students reported reading when the journal assignment was used as a motivator, an independent measure of reading comprehension indicated that quizzes improved comprehension more than the journal assignment. Students in the reading journal assignment class appeared to read superficially, skimming the readings to find answers to questions included in the assignment; students in the reading quiz class appeared to read more deeply because the reading quizzes tapped reading content in less predictable ways than did the journal assignments.

Instructors can implement reading quizzes by creating self-grading quizzes in eLearning as graded assignments. Close access to the quizzes on the due date for the assigned reading to motivate students to complete the reading *before* class sessions. Alternatively, some instructors implement reading quizzes in the first 5 minutes of the class meeting (perhaps as clicker questions). If completed during class, the reading quizzes also serve to motivate students to attend class and participate in planned learning activities.

### Resources:

Hoelt, M. E. (2012). Why university students don't read: What professors can do to increase compliance. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 6, (2). <http://academics.georgiasouthern.edu/ijsotl/v6n2.html>

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