

Selective Highlighting

Background

Selective Highlighting/Underlining is used to help students organise what they have read by selecting what is important. This strategy teaches students to highlight/underline ONLY the key words, phrases, vocabulary, and ideas that are central to understanding the reading.

Benefits

Selective Highlighting/Underlining is a flexible strategy that may be tailored to fit various types of information, and different skill-levels. You can employ the selective highlighting/underlining for many different instructional purposes (i.e., key vocabulary; main ideas). This strategy can also be integrated with the use of technology and electronic information such as eBooks (see example below). As students study, selective highlighting/underlining helps them learn to pay attention to the essential information within a text.

Create and use the strategy

Introduce students to the Selective Highlighting/Underlining strategy and discuss the purpose of the activity (i.e., focus on vocabulary, main ideas, etc.). Then model the procedure to ensure that students understand how to use Selective Highlighting/Underlining. Give students time and means to practice the technique and reinforce successful performance. Monitor and support students as they work. Ask students to:

1. Read through the selection first.
2. Reread and begin to highlight main ideas and their supporting details.
3. Highlight only the facts which are important, or the key vocabulary, not the entire sentence.
4. After highlighting, look at what they have highlighted and summarise what they read.
5. Take what was highlighted and write a summary paragraph.

Various colors of highlighters can be used to identify main ideas from details (e.g., use orange to represent main ideas and yellow to represent supporting details).

Research citation

Jones, R. (2006). Strategies for Reading Comprehension: Selective Underlining. Retrieved 2008, April 14, from <http://www.readingquest.org/strat/underline.html>