

Reading Activity – Reverse Reading*

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Objective

To enable learners to read a text from right to left to become fluent readers by moving their eyes in a different (i.e., the opposite) direction, which in turn would benefit them to employ strategies such as skimming and scanning.

Participation: Individual

Material: Any continuous text

Preparation: Nil

Procedure:

- ♥ Choose any unfamiliar printed text. (Initially, texts with short words would make reading easier. Longer words would pose a greater challenge; hence, after gaining some practice one could move to such texts.)
- ♥ Read it from right to left, as against the normal practice of reading from left to right. Consider it a fun activity to start with. (Mind is so accustomed to read from left to right; hence, it has to be retrained to read in the opposite direction. This process is known as ‘directional tracking’.)
- ♥ Start with the first line of a paragraph and read from right to left and continue this practice with the subsequent lines until the paragraph ends. Attempt to make sense of your reading, though it is challenging.
- ♥ Yet another way of doing it is to start from the last line of a paragraph, reading from right to left, and moving to the lines above and stopping with the first line. If there is a title/headline, it should be read in the same manner.
- ♥ Practise it repeatedly until one becomes familiar with this style of reading, though it is difficult in the beginning.
- ♥ Employ flexible eye movements to locate any specific information on a page by reading in the normal way, i.e., from left to right.
- ♥ Similarly, run your eyes quickly over a page to get the gist of it.

Learning Outcomes

1. Learners realize that an exercise of this kind familiarizes them with the shapes of letters and the spelling system, making their minds remain alert.
2. Learners understand the significance of flexible eye movements for employing reading strategies, viz., scanning and skimming for speed reading.

3. Learners recognize that written/printed texts are read differently, not always from left to right but top to bottom as well in certain languages.

Further Reading: Once in a while, learners could engage in a reverse reading exercise with any text they read, especially when the text does not engage them.

***Reverse Reading**

Reverse reading is defined (as stated in the procedure) as starting to read from the right and moving to the left and continuing to do so with the subsequent lines. Or, if one begins from the last line of a paragraph, one moves upwards, ending with the first line. Importantly, a reader should attempt to make sense of what is being read, lest it should become a meaningless activity. The major benefit of this activity is that it keeps the mind agile.

A **Japanese** text, although in modern times written horizontally, was traditionally written from top to bottom vertically with multiple columns progressing from right to left. However, the horizontal texts are written from left to right, as in English texts. Interestingly, Japanese readers can read both forms of layout easily.

Similarly, **Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean** also follow the style of writing vertically in columns moving from top to bottom and starting from right to left. Hence, training the eyes in different directions is important for their flexible movements to facilitate the process of fast reading.

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