

## Questioning

The goal of reading is to understand what the writer is trying to say to you, the reader, about a particular subject. In order to understand the writer's ideas, the reader must read actively—thinking and reacting to what the writer has written. One good way to read actively is through questioning.

Some students read an assignment without thinking, questioning or responding actively to what the author is trying to tell them. They read only words and do not understand the concepts or ideas behind the words. When these students are given a test on an assignment, they usually receive a low grade. Consequently, they may feel confused or frustrated, thinking to themselves, "But I read the assignment!"

The good reader, however, develops and uses questions that will help him to think actively about the assignment as he reads. These questions help him find the important concepts or ideas in a passage, understand what the author is trying to say about the concepts, and remember the important points and details that support them.

### How to Question to Make Inferences

When reading actively, the reader goes beyond what is simply stated on the page. The reader does this by making inferences based on the information given by the writer. An inference, therefore, is simply a conclusion or decision based on the facts or information given in the reading.

Actually, you make inferences constantly in everyday life. For example, if on a sunny day you have been studying for several hours in a library without windows and you see a man walk in with a dripping umbrella and wet shoes, you can conclude that it has started to rain outside.

In reading, however, drawing conclusions or making inferences is not as easy or automatic as making decisions in everyday life. You, the reader, will need to become a detective, trying to solve a mystery with all of the information the writer gives you.

### The following questions will help you learn to make inferences.

- Think about these questions as you read.
- What are the facts?

- Does the author make any implications with these facts? (In other words, is the author implying anything beyond the stated meaning of the words?)
- Does your conclusion or inference make sense based on these facts?