Reading & Understanding — Study Sheet

If you can read and truly understand what you read, every other door opens. This is the master key.

The Essentials

Read closely — and check you understood

What it is: Read a short piece, then say it back in your own words. If you can't, read it again.

Why it matters: Understanding — not just saying the words — is what reading is for.

Source: Khan Academy — free reading & vocabulary — https://www.khanacademy.org/ela

Use a dictionary without shame

What it is: Look up any word you don't know. Keep a short list of new words you learned this week.

Why it matters: Every new word is a new tool. Strong readers look words up all the time.

Source: Vocabulary.com Dictionary (free) — https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/

Get a free library card

What it is: Your local public library lends books, audiobooks, and computers — for free.

Why it matters: The most powerful learning tool in your town costs nothing.

Source: Find your public library — https://www.usa.gov/libraries-and-archives

Source: Project Gutenberg — 70,000+ free books — https://www.gutenberg.org/

Read the news like a detective

What it is: Ask: Who wrote this? What do they want me to think? What facts back it up? Then check the same story from more than one source before you believe it.

Why it matters: Reading without questioning is how people get fooled. No single outlet — or fact-checker — is the whole truth. See the "Check It Yourself" toolkit at the top of this page for how to verify anything on your own.

Source: Compare left/center/right coverage (AllSides) — https://www.allsides.com/unbiased-balanced-news

Source: The SIFT method for checking claims — https://hapgood.us/2019/06/19/sift-the-four-moves/

Show Your Stuff — Challenges

1. What does the word "context" mean?

Answer: The situation or surrounding words that help explain something's meaning.

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2. Give a word that means the same as "big."

Answer: Large, huge, enormous, giant, massive — any of these work.

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3. After reading a paragraph, what's the fastest way to check you understood it?

Answer: Say it back in your own words without looking. If you can't, read it again.

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4. What is the difference between a fact and an opinion?

Answer: A fact can be checked and proven true. An opinion is what someone believes or feels.

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5. You see a shocking claim online. Name three things you should do before you believe or share it.

Answer: Stop and slow down; investigate who is behind it; find the same claim in other sources across the spectrum; and trace it back to the original document, clip, or data. Never trust a single source — including a single fact-checker.
