

## Using Prior Knowledge

### Cross-Curricular Focus: Study Skills



When you are preparing to learn something new, it is a good idea to get your brain ready to receive the information.

Think of your brain like a gigantic filing system. It contains all the things you have ever learned, read, listened to, seen or experienced. Organizing all of those files is quite a large job. Fortunately, your brain has an automatic system for connecting files together. This helps you find information quickly. Take a few moments to prepare your brain. It will be easier for your brain to connect what you are learning to all the things you have learned before. Your **prior knowledge** is the information that you already have filed in your brain.

If you are listening to a teacher or other speaker, write down the topic. Activate your prior knowledge. Do this by thinking about what you already know about that topic. Jot down a few notes before, during and after the lesson.

It is a good idea to preview your textbook before you read. Do this whether you read by yourself or as part of a group. First, read the title. Next, scan through the photos and other visual aids. Let your brain make an outline for what the information it will receive. Some books have vocabulary words in the margins. Read the definitions. Then you will already be familiar with the new words when you see them in the reading.

Take the time to activate your prior knowledge. Your brain will make the connections it needs to file the new information where you can find it. You will be a more successful student.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Answer the following questions based on the reading passage. Don't forget to go back to the passage whenever necessary to find or confirm your answers.**

1) What is your brain's information system compared to in this passage?

\_\_\_\_\_

2) How can you make it easier for your brain to form connections between new information and things you've learned before?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3) What does it mean to activate your prior knowledge? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4) What is something you can do to help you understand new vocabulary in the reading?

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\_\_\_\_\_

5) What is a benefit of using your prior knowledge?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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Answer the following questions based on the reading passage. Don't forget to go back to the passage whenever necessary to find or confirm your answers.

**Actual wording of answers may vary.**

1) What is your brain's information system compared to in this passage?

a filing system

2) How can you make it easier for your brain to form connections between new information and things you've learned before?

Prepare your brain first.

3) What does it mean to activate your prior knowledge? Think about what you already

know about the topic.

4) What is something you can do to help you understand new vocabulary in the reading?

Look at the words and definitions

before you read.

5) What is a benefit of using your prior knowledge?

It will help your brain place information

where you can find it easily.