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# To the Student

How do you read for meaning? Reading for meaning requires going beyond merely reading the words. The reader must understand key elements of a reading, the intent of the author, and even sometimes the techniques the author uses to create meaning. A knowledgeable reader develops strategies that aid in any type of reading. The aware reader knows and manages these strategies and uses them to read effectively.

First, the reader must identify and understand the main idea of the reading. What is the essential purpose of the information and what is the main point gained from the reading?

Second, the reader must identify the key points used to support or develop the main idea. Understanding the relationship of these points and their connection to the main idea will deepen understanding.

Third, the reader must draw conclusions or make inferences about the information presented. It requires the reader to think - identifying, prioritising, analysing, connecting, evaluating and combining. A reader must understand the explicit and the implicit information embedded in a reading. Explicit statements are easy to identify. They clearly state a conclusion: Golfers should quit golfing and seek shelter during thunderstorms. However, implicit statements are more difficult. They only suggest a conclusion: Golfing during thunderstorms is dangerous. The aware reader must look for both explicit and implicit messages.

Fourth, the reader may need to know techniques used to craft a piece of writing. A few techniques important to meaning are point of view, foreshadowing, characterisation and theme.

What is the impact of learning strategies on understanding meaning? The ultimate goal is to become a lifelong learner and use reading to develop opinions, solve problems and enhance entertainment.

Use this book to sharpen your reading-for-meaning skills. Various reading experiences will be provided. Following each reading, questions will require you to develop skill in getting the main idea, identifying key points, and making inferences or drawing conclusions. Some readings will provide opportunities to identify and analyse the writer's techniques. In addition, a writing task will be included. This will require you to apply the information and meanings. Writing tasks will vary from school-oriented tasks to authentic real-world tasks.

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# Are Air Bags Safe?

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What is an air bag? Many people believe it is a pillow of air that billows out to protect travellers from injury during an accident, but that is not an entirely accurate picture. An air bag contains air, but the force with which the bag is inflated at the onset of an accident could not be described as pillow-like or billowing. Instead, it is a lot like hitting a soft wall. As a result, technology's answer to improved safety is causing problems.

Air bags are an addition to the safety systems installed in cars. What are the components of a car's safety system? Seat belts are the obvious. The position of the belts, the webbing strength, and the locking systems that reduce forward momentum all play a role in seat belt safety. In addition, car engineers design safety features into the car's construction to reduce the crushing of the car during impact.

The problem is simple. A car engineer cannot plan for all the possible positions, angles and speeds of a car crash to ensure safety with design alone. Also, crush engineering is expensive. Some cars are not designed to withstand crashes as well as others. Seat belts improve safety; however, seat belts are not effective if they are not used. Adding air bags seems to make sense. It doesn't require the occupant to do anything. This might be the wrong thinking that gets people into trouble.

What is the problem with air bags? Contact with an air bag within ten centimetres of its inflating space can be fatal. Contact with an air bag at fifteen centimetres is safer. Children and small adults are at risk, due to their proximity to the air bag. In the United States there have been at least 50 deaths caused by air bags. Thirty-two of those deaths were children placed in rear-facing child restraint seats and propelled into the front seat during impact with the air bag or children in front-facing child restraint seats not fastened to the automobile's seat. On impact, these seats flew forward into the air bag. In addition, airbags are dangerous when not combined with seatbelt use. These problems are not as serious in Australia, where the rate of seat belt wearing is higher (97% compared to the U.S. 75%) and our airbags deploy at higher impact speeds. Accordingly, there have been no recorded cases of airbags causing serious injury in Australia.



# **Analysing Facts**

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## **Getting the Main Idea**

1. What did you know about air bags before reading the article?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What sentence in paragraph one states the main idea of this article?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How do this sentence and your knowledge match?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## **Gathering Key Facts**

4. List the three components designed into car safety.  
\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_
5. List three human factors that make car safety design inadequate.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. State a serious problem with air bags.  
\_\_\_\_\_

## **Drawing Conclusions**

7. What conclusion do you draw when you compare the number of fatalities caused by airbags in the United States to the situation in Australia?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Are air bags a good addition to car safety? \_\_\_\_\_ Explain your answer.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# ***Getting Involved with Automotive Safety***

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**Directions:** Do additional research on automotive safety. Stop at your local car dealer and ask about crush engineering, air bag regulations and improvements, and seat belt design. Visit the Internet site of the Roads and Traffic Authority in your state or territory. Simply use any search engine and type the letters 'RTA'.

1. State your current opinion on automotive safety.

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2. On a separate sheet of paper, list research facts on automotive safety.

3. State your new opinion on automotive safety.

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4. Did it change or stay the same? \_\_\_\_\_

Explain your answer.

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**The Assignment:** Write a letter to someone you think should hear your opinion on automotive safety. Clearly state your opinion. Use facts you have gathered to support your opinion and convince the reader that you are a concerned and informed citizen. Conclude your letter by proposing an action that this person should take regarding automotive safety.