

Prelude to the **READING** Power Workout

The choices you make about reading shape your future. Choose wisely.

F. Lively and M. Weatherford



Get Ahead—Do not skip this prelude. It contains critical information about your workout. Also, you will see this *Get Ahead* icon frequently as you work through this book. Watch for it, as it will usually come with a few words of advice that may help you succeed.

To the Student:

So you want to graduate and all that you need to do is pass the *Virginia Standards of Learning, End-of-Course Reading* assessment. Right now some of you are probably wondering with a sigh and with a roll of your eyes whether this book is like so many other review books that treat students like sponges who just sit and soak up the learning. We sincerely hope that you will discover what other students have figured out: reviewing what you need to know is easier and more fun when you take charge of it yourself. That is why, throughout this book, we encourage you to be active. You will constantly review and revisit your thinking and look for ways to improve. Just as a physical workout plan is designed to build a strong and agile body, this book presents a mental workout plan designed to build a strong and agile mind.

The two of us have been around Virginia schools for a long time, and we have successfully prepared many students for these critical Standards of Learning assessments. Here is what one student said about **READING** Power:

“Ms. L, I’ve already had this lesson when you came to my last high school. But I guess that’s okay; I’ll stick around for this one, too, because this lesson really rocks. I used what you told me on my history teacher’s test and got a B! Maybe if I stay for another lesson, I’ll learn enough to pass a biology test.”

We were thrilled to receive that student’s endorsement! We are even more thrilled to be able to bring **READING** Power to a wider audience with this book than we could reach in person. We hope that you will use this book to reach new levels of reading fitness and achieve your goals.

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Warming Up

Before we begin any workout, we should warm up, and this one is no different. From experience, we know that you probably have questions. We will start our warmup by asking and answering some common questions.

Frequently Asked Questions



Get Ahead—Virginia’s goal is to see every teenager graduate; therefore, you can learn more than you ever thought you could about the reasons and purposes of the Virginia Standards of Learning assessments by visiting this website: <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/>

- *I know what a SOL test is, but what exactly is measured on the EOC Reading assessment?*

The End-of-Course Reading assessment measures how well you understand what you read. It is based on passages, and some passages—like exercises—are easier than others. Many educators throughout the state of Virginia (including the two authors of this workout) have convened to discuss and to determine exactly what most teens should know by the time they complete a course in American Literature. The committees decided that two categories of learning are critical and should be reported: (1) Use of word analysis strategies and information resources and (2) Demonstration of comprehension of printed materials.

Word Analysis means that you must decipher the meaning of words, both general and specialized, as used in context.

Use of Information Resources means that you can conduct a research project from beginning to end. You will also know how to determine which resource is better than the others.

For the second category, Comprehension of Printed Materials, you need to read and to analyze a fiction, nonfiction, or informational text. To succeed with this part of the test, you will need to know how to recognize such elements as main idea, theme, characterization, literary terminology, fact or opinion, cause and effect, inference, and organization of text.

- *What is a passing score on the EOC Reading assessment?*

The final score is scaled to 400, but for the EOC Reading a comfortably passing raw score would be 35 correct out of 50 scored questions. However, there are 10 additional field questions which do not count toward your score. They are being tested for use in future tests. Since you do not know which ones they are, you should strive for at least 40 correct answers out of 60 questions.

- *How will this book actually help me pass this test?*

Both of us authors are reading specialists, have taught students how to read strategically, and have shown them how to take tests successfully. We have also participated on the review committees for Virginia's SOL assessments. You will reap the benefits of our time in the classroom as well as our experience on these committees. We know a lot and enjoy sharing.

- *How do I get psyched for this test?*

- ◆ Bolster your attitude—that is the key. If you have a positive attitude, you will do better. Convince yourself that you will have fun and you will succeed. Remember, graduation is just around the corner.
- ◆ Realize that you have had excellent English teachers. They have prepared you well for this test.
- ◆ Study and practice *READING Power*. As with any workout, benefits increase as you practice.
- ◆ Get plenty of sleep the night before the examination and eat a good breakfast on test day. Recent studies indicate that your brain might benefit from adding *choline* to your diet. Your liver produces choline, but not enough. So if you eat eggs, red meat, peanut butter and oranges, you are probably increasing your brain power. Consequently, on test day, boost your memory by squeezing yourself a large glass of orange juice and munching on peanut butter toast.

- *What do I do to earn a top score on standardized tests generally?*

On the next page are 10 Active Test-Taking tips. They are what we told that high-school student who then did very well on a history test. We think that they are critical strategies; you will see them repeated throughout this workout.



Top 10 Active Test-Taking Tips

1. Determine what type of learner, reader, and test-taker you are. Everyone learns in a unique way; everyone takes a test in a unique way. Identify the skills that you need to master. Set realistic goals. Then practice, practice, and practice until you feel confident that you have mastered these skills.
2. Discover what works for you. Keep a positive, can-do attitude throughout the whole test and try to stay relaxed. If you start to feel nervous, take a few deep breaths to relax. Do not stop reading if you do not know a particular word or you are bored with the topic. Continue to read in order to understand the main ideas. Remember, you can do it.
3. When you first receive your test, do a quick survey of the entire test so that you know what is on it and can efficiently budget your time. The End-of-Course test is not timed, but you should not spend too much time on any one question. Do the test in sequential order. If a question stumps you, mark it and return to it after you finish the remainder of the test. **Do not leave any blanks.**
4. Be an active, assertive reader when taking any standardized test. Write in the test booklet. Read the questions first. Look for and highlight key words. Re-word each question so that you understand what it is asking you to answer. For some questions, you can eliminate wrong answer choices immediately. For others, you should wait until you read the passage to conduct this process of elimination.
5. Jot down notes in the margin of the passage. If a question refers to a specific paragraph, write the question beside the paragraph. Then, read the entire passage carefully, especially the paragraphs that contain answers. As you read, highlight key words and try to figure out the answer in your head before looking at the possible answers. This way the choices given on the test won't throw you off or trick you. Read all the choices bottom-up. If you spot the answer you think is right, hold off bubbling that one in until you "test" each choice.
6. Re-read all questions containing negative wording such as "not," "except," or "least." Make sure you fully understand what they are asking.
7. Re-read the question stem with each option in order to see if a choice makes sense. Treat each option as a true-false question, and choose the "most true." Multiple-choice questions are basically true/false questions arranged in groups.
8. Be extremely reluctant to change any of your answers. Usually your first choice is the right one. However, don't hesitate to change your answer if you have a sound reason. For example, change an answer if you originally misread the question, or if you discover information elsewhere that indicates that your first choice is wrong.
9. When you are finished, look over your test to make sure that you have answered all the questions. Watch out for careless mistakes.
10. Don't worry if others finish before you; continue to focus on the test until you have answered every question. When you turn in your test, you should be proud of your effort. You have done the best you can do.

Calculating Your Brainy Mass Index

Before beginning a strenuous exercise program, you should look in the mirror to determine where you are physically and mentally. If you know where you are, you can better decide where you need to go and how best to get there.

Please take a few minutes to complete the following survey that helps you understand what type of learner, reader, and test-taker you are. Read each statement in all three sections and decide how it applies to you. Beside each statement, check the column for the answer that most applies to you: *often*, *sometimes*, or *rarely*.

A Brainy Mass Index

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely
Learner			
I am very curious and am motivated to earn good grades.			
I remain focused while teachers teach a lesson.			
I remember material that I hear (auditory learner).			
I remember material that I see (visual learner).			
I remember material that I touch and manipulate (tactile).			
Reader			
I like to read and I read both to learn and for pleasure.			
I automatically think about what I already know.			
I concentrate and remain alert while reading.			
I quickly locate essential information.			
I can summarize and discuss what I have read.			
Test-taker			
I like taking tests and usually do quite well.			
I learn all I can about the type of test I will take.			
I look at questions first and then read to locate answers.			
I read passages carefully.			
I remain alert and focused throughout the test.			

Calculate your Brainy Mass Index

Physical fitness programs often begin by measuring body mass index, which is a measure of your height and weight. It can be thought of as a rough indicator of your current level of physical fitness. The questions in our survey assess your “Brainy Mass Index,” which is a rough indicator of your current level of mental fitness.

- If you answered *rarely* to at least 12 out of 15 statements, you are struggling to build your mental fitness level. If you choose to, you will benefit tremendously from this workout.
- If you answered *often* to at least 12 out of 15 statements, congratulations are in order. You are already in great mental shape. But like any top athlete, a good workout and training program can help you reach the top of your game.
- If you had any other pattern of answers, you are in average mental shape. You have strengths and weaknesses, like any athlete. If you think about what you would like to improve and what approaches work for you, you can use this workout to attain passing or high scores on standardized tests.

Set Your READING Power Workout Goals

People want different things from their workouts. Take a moment to think about your Brainy Mass Index and write down what you would like to achieve. For example: Do you want to get a Proficient score on the SOL Reading exam? Do you want to get an Advanced score? Do you want to build up reading skills and strategies for use in other parts of your life?

My goals are—


Working Out with Note-Taking

One of the most powerful tools a reader can use while working out is taking notes. When someone begins a strenuous exercise regimen, one records in a journal all activities that connect to the workout program. During this *READING Workout*, you need to keep a workout journal. In this journal you will record key concepts, words, and processes.

How should you take notes? We prefer a two-column note-taking procedure. You may use your preferred method—whatever works for you is best. Here is an example of the type of notes we take:

Workout Journal: Two-column Note-taking

Chapter Heading _____ Pages: _____

Key Words/Questions	Notes
<p>Record: In this column jot down key topics, major headings, categories, and key words.</p> <p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record questions that guide the reading or note-taking. We begin each chapter with a set of questions that guide your comprehension. Your teacher might furnish additional questions, or sometimes these are the questions that you ask when you want a concept clarified. Review: Jot down questions that your teacher asks during review of a chapter. <p>Connections: Jot down your impressions of what you read.</p> <p>Mnemonics: Draw icons or visual cues that boost your memory.</p>	<p>Record: As you read the chapter, use the note-taking column to summarize key topics and major concepts listed in the left-hand column.</p> <p>Notes: Notes should include facts and details:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> answer <i>who, what, where, when, why, and how</i> illustrate key concepts with examples synthesize the main ideas and supporting details present a comprehensive visual aid of what was read or said by the teacher <p>Summary: Practice writing summaries in one sentence.</p> <p>Remembering facts: You should spend at least ten minutes every week reviewing previous notes. If you do, you will retain information, and you will noticeably detect a successful performance on all types of tests.</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <p><i>Get Ahead</i>—When reviewing a passage from the Diagnostic Test, jot down what you learned that would help you take future tests. For example, explain why you think you missed a specific question.</p> </div> </div>

Try it! Create a workout journal for this Prelude.

What Next?

You are now ready to take the **Diagnostic Test**. This test is like the End-of-Course assessment. After taking it, you will have a clearer idea of what to expect on the “real” test. You will also discover what you need to practice. After you take it and it is scored, you will chart which items you missed on the organizer that is located in **Appendix A**. Study the chart so that you know which reporting categories and which skills and concepts you need to focus on. Keep all of that in mind as you study the chapters that contain the material you need to master.



Get Ahead—You have reading power. The more you exercise it, the stronger it will become. Make the choice to study and to practice in order to succeed with learning for a lifetime. Good readers bring so much to the reading task. Reading is thinking. Think long; think strong.

Cooling Down: Packing Your Workout Bag

It is time to begin your workout, so pack your bag. Like a doctor or a mechanic, it pays to organize your tools ahead of time. That way, you always have everything you need right at hand so that you can get right to work.

In this satchel, you want to place items that will stimulate your brain, items that will make your workout focused and productive. For example, in our bag, we placed pencils, highlighters, self-stick notes, a dictionary, a synonym dictionary, an MP3 player, and, of course, a copy of this book! Since it is important to record what you are doing, we hope that, like us, you also pack a journal.

What items would you like to include in your workout bag?



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