

Introduction to the 3-2-1 Reading Strategy

Students often feel overwhelmed with the amount of readings they are assigned, and they don't know how to tell whether they are prepared for class discussion. To simplify the burden of difficult readings or heavy loads, Shawna Shapiro, author of *Cultivating Critical Language Awareness in the Writing Classrooms* (2022), suggests trying the mnemonic **3-2-1 reading strategy** to help students understand and talk about the reading. This tip may work especially well for students reading in a less-familiar language, as Shapiro's students have reported it being a transformative move in their education and approach to coursework. In general, this is a strategy that may help any student reading something challenging.

In response to a reading, try telling students that they should aim to come up with **three** main ideas or concepts, **two** connections to other readings, the self, or the community, and **one** question to clarify, reflect, or discuss. Shapiro says, "having a 'threshold' for reading in preparation for class can really build students' confidence and curiosity" (296). Ironically, sometimes lowering the expectations a little bit can simultaneously lower the students' stress and help them end up pushing past their limitations and improving the quality of their work.

Learn About the 3-2-1 Reading Strategy and More from Shapiro Herself

For more information about this helpful reading strategy and other teaching philosophies, approaches, and strategies, check out Shawna Shapiro's book, [Cultivating Critical Language Awareness in the Writing Classroom](#) (2022). Much of the information in her book is also compiled on the [Critical Language Awareness \(CLA\) Collective](#) website, including a handout for students in the form of a "[3-2-1 Reading Worksheet](#)," also found on the back of this resource. To discuss how you can further support students, contact the Writing in the Disciplines Program at wid@uvm.edu.

3-2-1 Reading Strategy:

- **3 Key Points or Concepts**
- **2 Connections to *Self*, to Other *Texts*, or to the *World***
- **1 Question or Point of Confusion**

3-2-1 Reading Strategy Handout for Students

Article/Reading Title	Author(s)	Class or Date

3 Main Points or Concepts:	Page # (optional)
1.	
2.	
3.	
2 Comments or Connections <i>(to other ideas in the class, another class, or to your own life or the world):</i>	
1.	
2.	
1 Question <i>(something that you don't understand or that would be good to ask in a class discussion):</i>	

This handout is adapted from the worksheet on Shawna Shapiro's CLA Collective website.