

KEY WORDS & PHRASES

By identifying the important words or phrases in a question or an instruction BEFORE you try to complete the task, you save time and increase the likelihood of finding the right answer or correctly completing the task.



KEY POINTS

Key words:

- are usually determined by a question you have been asked or a problem you need to solve
- are the words that help you to understand the meaning or message in what you are reading
- are words without which what you are reading does not make sense

Key phrases:

- are a group of key words that are dependent on each other for meaning
- can be identified by asking yourself: If I separate the words in this phrase will the meaning change?
 - For example, the word *fight* on its own means something different to the key phrase *fight fatigue*.

Question key words:

- tell you what type of information to look for, in order to correctly answer a question

Question key word	Type of information to look for
Who	A person, name or group of people
What	A thing or event
Where	A place or location
When	A time or date
Why	A reason
How	A way
How often	A frequency or time
How many	A number



STEPS

1. Highlight or underline the words or phrases in a question or sentence that you think are key words.
2. If it helps you to confirm they are the key words and phrases, cross out the words in the sentence that you believe are not important to the overall meaning (also called "supporting words") like this: "~~The~~ meeting ~~on~~ Tuesday ~~is at~~ 4:00." The words that are left still give a clear message: *meeting Tuesday 4:00*. They are key words.

If the exact key word or phrase you are looking for is not in the document you are searching, you might be able to find a *synonym*. A synonym is a word that means the same thing or almost the same thing as the key word.

For example: you have been given this instruction "*Find out the number of metal top posts we can expect in the shipment.*", and you are checking the invoice to find the answer. The word "number" is not on the invoice, but the word "quantity" is. Quantity is a synonym for number.

EXAMPLES

In the three examples below, key words and key phrases are underlined. Question words are circled. Supporting words are ~~crossed out~~.

1. How many ~~students are~~ enrolled in Blueprint Reading ~~for~~ next term?
2. Why ~~does the~~ engine ~~sometimes~~ runs hot ~~for no apparent reason.~~
3. What ~~is the~~ best knot ~~to use to~~ tie two ropes together?

Once you identify the key words in a question or instruction, it is easier to find the information you need to answer the question or complete the task.

For example, look at this question again:

How many students are enrolled in Blueprint Reading next term?

The key words and phrases in the question tell you:

- The answer you are looking for will be a number as the question asks "how many"
- There is a course or program called "Blueprint Reading"
- It is offered at different times, including "next term"

Knowing this before you start looking for the answer helps you narrow down what it is you are looking for so you can find the answer quickly and accurately.

Think you understand how key words and key phrases work?

Try it yourself on the next page.

USING THE SKILL



In the Workplace: Safety bulletins contain important information about how to reduce accidents, injuries and lost time.

QUESTIONS

Before reading the safety bulletin that follows the questions on the next 2 pages:

- underline the key words and key phrases in each of the questions
- circle the key question words

Use the key words/phrases/question words, to help you locate the answers to the questions and write them in the spaces provided.

1. What is the topic of the bulletin?
2. What are the 2 main ideas in the bulletin?
3. For what industry is fatigue a critical concern?
4. What are 3 symptoms of sleep deprivation?
5. How many workers are affected by sleep deprivation?
6. What are 3 ways workers can fight fatigue?

7. What are 2 ways employers can reduce fatigue?

8. What are 2 changes to work schedules that can reduce fatigue?



REFLECTION

How would you use this strategy at work? When would you use it?

Fatigue

Workplace Safety

The tragedies of Chernobyl, Three Mile Island and the Exxon Valdez all occurred during the night shift.

Fatigue is a critical occupational safety concern for shift workers, especially workers in the transportation industry. Off the job, being overtired creates a risk for anyone who undertakes an activity that requires concentration and quick response — from driving, to home repair, to skiing. And exhaustion is one of the most common health complaints for Canadian workers, especially women.

How sleep affects safety

Sleep is as basic to survival as food and water. Losing as little as two hours of sleep can negatively affect alertness and performance. Sleep deprivation affects a person's carefulness and ability to respond to an emergency. Symptoms can include: decreased judgment, decision-making and memory; slower reaction time; lack of concentration; fixation; and worsened mood.

Studies monitoring brain activity show that one shift worker in five dozes off during the shift. Often, they do not realize afterwards that they have done so. Drowsy drivers, according to sleep researchers, may cause as many crashes as impaired drivers. Regardless of motivation, professionalism, training or pay, an individual who is very sleepy can lapse into sleep at any time, despite the potential consequences of inattention.

How to fight fatigue

Workers can reduce fatigue through proper nutrition, stress control and exercise. A healthy diet provides longer-lasting energy — concentrate on complex carbohydrates (starch) rather than simple carbohydrates (sugar); and avoid fatty foods and junk food. Don't let negative circumstances get the better of you. And regular exercise is important — cardiovascular, muscle strengthening and flexibility.

Employers can avoid placing workers in jeopardy by analyzing working conditions, addressing operational safety disincentives and conducting sleep-safety training. Shorter shifts and work rotation schedules that go in the direction of the sun (morning, afternoon, night) have been found to reduce the negative effect.

Source: Canada Safety Council (2018). Fatigue. Retrieved from: <https://canadasafetycouncil.org/fatigue/>
Adapted from source. Content may not be current.