



## Effective Reading

College asks one to read a lot of sophisticated material. Your professors will expect you to:

- Read a wide variety of material with a high level of comprehension.
- Pick out main points and recognize significant details.
- Connect new information to other things you know.
- Read critically.

### Becoming a Good Reader

Reading is not a passive process but a very active one. Reading involves creating meaning, not just finding it. Good readers use what they already know to understand new material. They fit new facts into a pre-existing web of information. They engage in a dialogue with the text, questioning what they read and searching for answers. They predict what lies ahead in their reading, and they monitor their comprehension. You become a better reader by reading a lot and reading carefully. Your reading skills will improve dramatically if you do three things:

- Read actively.
- Mark your textbook properly.
- Review your reading periodically.

### Active Reading

- Active reading strategies help your concentration and force you to think while you read, which improves both comprehension and retention.
- Preview your reading. Spend five minutes looking at headings, first sentences of paragraphs and summaries. This gives you some sense of what the chapter holds.
- Create reading goals, questions that you will try to answer as you read. Turn titles, subheadings, chapter goals or summary statements into questions, or use questions raised by the professor in class, or questions that occurred to you during previewing.
- Read section by section, looking for answers to your reading questions.
- Look up any words you don't know.

### Marking Your Text

Most students mark too much! Markings should help you locate and review important material. Highlight only important points. Mark between 10-20 percent of a passage.

- Read a few pages, then go back and mark only the most important information. Separate reading from marking.
- Circle new terms and underline their definitions. Connect the term and definition by a line or arrow.
- Mark the answers to your reading questions.
- Draw attention to main ideas, perhaps by numbering.
- Use a pen rather than a highlighter. For some reason, highlighters seem to encourage students to mark their texts excessively.
- If you are marking too much, it means that you aren't able to select main points and important details.

Use the margins to record your reading goals and your reactions to what you read. This improves your concentration and makes it easier to review and recall your reading. Your reactions may include summaries, questions, personal associations, your opinions, your own

Ideas

ideas, notes to cross-reference other passages, or notes drawing your attention to others who agree or disagree.

Ideas

## Chapter Review

You must review to remember! Review right after reading. Review lecture notes daily and weekly. Read for 50 minutes, review for five, break for five. Review by:

- Rereading underlining and marginal notes
- Testing yourself with your reading questions
- Testing yourself with chapter review questions printed in text
- Rereading the text's chapter objectives and summaries
- Writing a one-page summary of your reading

Recite. As you quiz yourself or review important points, recite the information aloud to yourself.

## More Tips

- Plan specific times to read during the day/week.
- Plan enough time. How many pages can you read in an hour? Count your assigned reading for the week and make a realistic estimate.
- Get the right amount of rest at night so you don't fall asleep over your books. Nothing wastes more study time than being sleepy.

## Reading Difficult Material

Many students are challenged by the difficulty and quantity of college reading assignments. Students want to read quickly, but you also need to comprehend and retain what you read. Practicing these strategies will make you a more efficient reader in the long run.

When you're stuck, try one of these strategies:

- Stop and paraphrase the main idea of each paragraph. If the material is very dense, you may have to paraphrase each sentence as you read it.
- Read a particularly difficult sentence or passage aloud. Then paraphrase it. (This is also a good technique to try in a study group, if everyone is stuck on the same passage.)
- If you're stuck on a sentence, ask "What's the subject" and "What happens to the subject?"
- If you really can't understand a passage, write a question in the margin, and talk it over with a classmate, your study group or your instructor.

When you've finished a difficult passage, chapter or article:

- Don't forget to review your reading!
- Ask "How are these ideas related to each other?" Try making a flow chart of these relationships.
- Try outlining a difficult paragraph or short passage.

**What ideas do you like?**

**What ideas can be applied to your reading style?**

**How can this help inform the way you read your assignments?**

**What will you implement for your next reading assignment?**