

Reading Comprehension Tips and Strategies

Active reading

- You retain more when you actively engage and interact with the text!
- Copying down pages of notes word for word or scanning the page without reading/interacting doesn't engage your brain in a way that helps with understanding or retention
- Active reading forces your brain to interact with the text before, during, and after reading that help effectively gauge what you are/aren't learning

Before reading

Know the purpose

- What will you do with this information from this reading?
- Multiple choice exam?--> requires greater attention to details, such as keywords, definitions, dates, specific concepts, and examples
- Discussion or big essay? --> think more about the main points and relationships

Integrate prior knowledge

- You already know a lot based on what you have previously read, help yourself out!
- What do you already know about the material you have to read?
- Relate to previous topics from class
- Make a list of questions want to answer after/while reading

Preview the text

- Glance at what you have to read before jumping in
- Headings, diagrams, tables, pictures, bold words, summaries, key questions
- Read intros and conclusions to gather the main idea
- Predict what the section or chapter will be about and what the main concepts might be

Break reading into manageable chunks

- Check how much reading you have and how much time you have to read it
- Read a few pages and then take a quick break or review what have read to make sure have a better understanding
- Breaks help with focus, motivation, understanding, and retention
- Pomodoro technique: work for 25 minutes, followed by 2-3 5 minute breaks, then a longer break

While Reading

Self-monitor

- When you feel yourself start drifting away, stop and consider your need!
- Do you need a break
- A more active way to engage with text?
- More background noise/movement?
- Need to hear the text read aloud?
- Change of environment?
- Before starting again, summarize what you read up until your stopping point

Annotate

- Find a system to note things in the text, such as: key ideas/major points, unfamiliar words/unclear info, important info, connections, etc

Summarize

- After you have read small sections, summarize the main points and a few details in your own words
- Can be out loud or on paper
- This will serve as the base for your notes

Ask hard questions

- Put yourself in your prof's shoes, what kind of questions might they ask you about this section of reading?
- Think of higher level, critical thinking questions

After Reading

Check-in with yourself

- One of the most important things to do following reading is to check in and assess how much you understood from the reading
- Try cross-referencing with other writers on similar topics or peers in the same class
- Examples of key questions
 - are there multiple possible "answers" here?
 - is there a blind spot in your knowledge on the subject?
 - is the language of the text too difficult or unclear?
 - are different sources on the same subject using consistent language to discuss the same or similar things?

Show what you know

- Make an outline of what you just read from memory
 - start with the main points and work down towards details, with gaps to go back and fill in later
- Discuss with a friend or classmate
- "Teach" what you know to a friend/roommate
- Brain dump --> write down EVERYTHING you remember from the reading in 5 minutes
- Ask yourself critical questions about the reading
- Identify the important concepts from the reading and provide examples and non-examples of each concept
- Create a concept map from memory
- If your text is online, take screenshots to use as a starting point for class notes or annotations

Investigate further

- If there are parts of the info that are still unclear, search up other resources from trusted sources or web-based study guide
- Still have unanswered questions?
 - make a note to ask a friend, prof, classmate, or TA when come back to class

Self-test

- Create flashcards or an outline for the main concepts, terms, and dates in the text
- Test yourself using the flashcards or outline and see what you remember/understood correctly
- See what you know without referring to your notes

Created by: Abigail Hylton - 2024

From the Learning Center - University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
<https://learningcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/reading-comprehension-tips/>