



Reading Effectively

Techniques: Different types of reading require different techniques; remember to make adjustments, vary your pace, use study groups for difficult material, stay active by taking margin notes.

Pre-reading: Don't dismiss this strategy because you think it takes too much time; it's essential for getting the "big picture" and reinforcing material. It may take only 10 minutes!

- Pre-read before a lecture.
- Pre-read (and skim) if you've procrastinated and time is an issue.
- Pre-read a whole course (syllabus, reading list) to discover emphases, organization, priorities.
- Pre-read an exam before diving in: get clues about emphases and help budget time.
- Pre-read for review: intros, conclusions, bullet points, bold-face, section headings, diagrams.
- Pre-reading will give you a more complete idea of the reading so that you may participate in class discussion.

Scanning: Strategy for quickly finding specific information (words, ideas, definitions). Disregard anything not related to focus of interest.

- Scan when creating lists of definitions, names, dates, etc. for test prep/review.
- Scan for finding answers to homework.
- Scan for making up questions for review.

Skimming: Strategy for getting a general idea of a chapter or article without focusing on every word. Not recommended for fiction.

- Skim (along with pre-reading) if you've procrastinated.
- Skim ahead when you're having a difficult time; seeing the bigger picture may help.
- Skim when on the basis of pre-reading you know you can.
- Skim to reinforce basic points

Summarizing: Strategy that is the best kind of note-taking, showing that you've understood the material by putting it in your own words.

- Summarize to keep track of many readings.
- Summarize to help make relationships between readings, formulate paper topics, and review concepts.
- Summarize after each lecture to capture the emphases and possible exam questions.
- Summarize your answer in an essay exam in the first paragraph; this shows the reader that you know where you're going and eliminates the possibility that you may run out of time before you make your main point.

Asking questions: Strategy that keeps you active when you are reading or reviewing; promotes critical thinking rather than reading passively.

- Turn sub-headings and topic sentences into questions, then read until you know the answer. You may not to read all of the examples if you can answer the question after one or two.
- Asking questions will reveal the writer's purpose.
- Make up questions that might be exam questions or questions that ask for major distinctions, comparisons, or concepts. Try answering your questions in writing in order to loosen up and practice for an exam.
- Ask yourself about assumptions (the writer's, the professor's, your own) and answer in writing.

Remember: Effective reading is active reading. Passively slogging through a text trying to remember every detail is not efficient or effective.