

Reading for Comprehension

Active Reading Strategies

Preview

- Determine what the reading focuses on
- Look at your syllabus- does this reading fall under a heading/topic?
- Read Introductions and Conclusions. Note headings and sections, illustrations, bolded words, summaries, the genre

While Reading, Ask Critical Questions

- What are the main ideas and important topics? How do the concepts relate to one another?
- Examples: What differences exist between ____? How is ____ an example of ____? What are the features of ____? Do you agree that ____? Explain.

Relate to Prior Knowledge

- How does this reading relate to previous class assignments? To anything you already know about the topic? How does it connect to you?
- Ask why your professor may have assigned this reading.

Review

- Ask yourself about the main ideas. Answer any critical questions you have asked.
- Try to teach what you've learned to someone else. If you have gaps in your knowledge, go back over the material and fill them in.
- Create an outline of the text from memory. Make a concept map of what you've learned.

SQ3R Method

- *Survey*: Read the title, headings, outlines, any bolded words, the introduction and conclusion.
- *Question*: Turn each heading into a question.
- *Read*: Read through paragraphs/sections to answer your questions. Add more questions if needed.
- *Recite*: Without looking at your notes/textbook, recite aloud the answer to your question at the end of each section. Repeat until you get them correct.
- *Review/Reflect*: After you've read the whole chapter, go back and try to recite the answers to each of your questions. Also, find connections between the questions and the overall reading/course topic. Write a 1-2 sentence reflection summary.

Before you Begin Reading

- **Make a reading schedule- prioritize readings (usually the most important and/or hardest first), break a text up into manageable chunks, build in breaks and rewards**
- **Choose a productive time of day and create a distraction-free zone**
- **Know your purpose- what do you need to be able to do or know after this reading**



Highlighting/ Underlining

Writing notes in the margin is more effective. When you feel the urge to highlight something, write instead: summarize the text, ask questions, agree or disagree with the author.

If you must highlight: only highlight AFTER you've read the paragraph/section. Go back and highlight the main ideas. Making these choices leads to deeper processing.

Highlight as minimally as possible—key words, phrases, etc.

Skimming

Is Useful when: you just need to know the big picture; you are conducting research (so you can determine if a text will be useful to you); you simply don't have time to do a full reading.

Is Not Useful when: you need to know details; you don't understand a subject very well; you are reading novels, short stories, or biblical texts.

How to Skim:

- Be strategic, focused, intentional, and selective.
- Read introductions and conclusions. Read the first and last sentences of paragraphs. Look over bold words and text features.
- Read only enough of a paragraph to know if it is important to you or contains a main idea. Look for words that will clue you in to where the author is headed (ex. however, although, in conclusion...).
- Skim the table of contents of a book and only read what you need for the task at hand.

Sources and Useful Resources

<https://www.esc.edu/online-writing-center/resources/critical-reading-writing/general-reading/interpreting-texts-asking-questions/>
<https://learningcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/using-highlighters/>
<https://learningcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/reading-comprehension-tips-2/>
<https://learningcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/reading-textbooks-effectively/>
<https://learningcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/taking-notes-while-reading/>
<http://lsc.cornell.edu/notes.html>
<https://mcgraw.princeton.edu/active-reading-strategies>
<https://medium.goodnotes.com/study-with-ease-the-best-way-to-take-notes-2749a3e8297b>
<https://prod.wp.cdn.aws.wfu.edu/sites/66/2018/07/Reading-Skills.pdf>
https://www.ucc.vt.edu/academic_support/online_study_skills_workshops/SQ3R_improving_reading_comprehension.html

Taking Notes

- Enter into a dialogue with the author(s).
- Use your own words; never copy directly from the text.
- Try one of the following methods or combine them for your use:

Paragraph Review

- Read a paragraph or section, then write down, in your own words, a summary of the main concepts of what you've just read in the margins or on a separate note sheet. If needed, provide 2-3 key details or examples/non-examples for each concept.
- Write down any questions you have about the concept or any ideas you still don't understand. Identify and define unfamiliar terms.

Annotating

- Develop a system that helps you track key words, unfamiliar words/ideas you don't understand, important information, connections between ideas.
- Can use color coding, symbols, colored sticky tabs, sticky notes with main ideas for each chapter, etc.; use the left/right columns strategically.
- Use the same system each time you read so that you become familiar with it.

The Cornell Method

- Divide a paper into 3 sections: a blank section 2 inches from the bottom, then divide the top by one-third to the left and two-thirds to the right.
- Make notes in the top right section while reading. List main ideas/key words in the top left section shortly after you've read. Later, write a brief overall summary at the bottom.

The “What it says” and “What it does” Method

- Read a paragraph/section. In one sentence, summarize what it says.
- Think about what it does—what is the paragraph's purpose in the text (does it provide an example of a main idea, does it introduce an opposing view, etc.). In one sentence, summarize what it does.