

STRATEGIES FOR READING COLLEGE ASSIGNMENTS

Almost all college students, regardless of their major, have a lot of reading to do! It is very important that you complete all your reading assignments, but it is even more important that you understand the readings that you complete, and that you remember what you've read.

Below are some tips and strategies for how to read, understand, and remember a college assignment.

1. Preview the Reading

Before you dive into reading an assignment, do a 3-5 minute preview by flipping through the pages and skimming the reading. You should get a sense for the main topic of what you are going to read so you can be prepared for how the reading will support the main topic. As you preview look for:

- **Chapter titles and headings** – These will almost always help you figure out the main topic.
- **Bold or underlined words** – When a word is in bold or underlined, that is a great indicator that those words are tied to the main topic.
- **Introductory questions or chapter completion questions** – By reading these questions first, you will know what information you should be looking for as you read.
- **Charts or graphs** – Textbook editors put these in for a reason! If you review them before you start reading, it will help tie the concepts of the chapter together.
- **Remember: before you begin the reading, make sure you can clearly identify the main topic of what you'll be reading.**

As you develop good previewing skills, you will be able to anticipate the main topics and concepts before you begin to read.

2. Annotate – Mark it up!

Don't be afraid to highlight, write, or flag important parts of your reading assignments—being an active reader will force you to pay attention to what you're reading. This will help you locate important information when you go back to review. Here are some tips for good annotating:

- Find a system that works for you. Some students like to use a highlighter; some take notes in the margins, and some use post-it notes to flag important passages. Try a few different techniques and see what works best for you.
- Underline key words, put a question mark next to ideas you don't understand, put a check in the margin if you agree with the author, write in the margin if an idea reminds you of something else from the course.
- Read a chunk of material and then annotate after. Start with reading a single paragraph all the way through, and then go back and highlight/annotate the important parts. If you annotate as you go, instead of after reviewing a small section, you are more likely to over-annotate.
- You should only annotate 25% or less of your text. If you find that you are highlighting entire paragraphs or multiple sentences, you are going overboard.

The more writing you do as you read, the more information you will remember. This will help you as you study for tests.

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3. Review As You Go

Reading a text from start to finish without stopping is not the best way to retain information. An active reader stops to review as they read and to make sure they understand key concepts. Here are a few ideas for how to review as you go:

- After every few paragraphs, or after every page, summarize the main point of that section and figure out how it supports the main topic of the reading. (You can make a note in the margins if that will help you remember!)
- If you are reading a text without sub-headings, try making your own sub-headings. Write what the main topic is for a chunk of reading in order to make the text better for reviewing for a test.
- If your text has chapter questions that you skimmed at the beginning, make sure you are answering them as you read. If you can't answer the question completely, go back to it at the end of the reading section.
- If you read a section and you find yourself re-reading it because you don't understand, see if you can put it in your own words. If not, mark it and ask your professor—they're there to help!

Do not simply read a text from start to finish and put it away. You must review as you go so you can practice connecting all the concepts you are reading about to the main topic.

4. Always schedule reading blocks for at least 30 minutes!

Anything less than 30 minutes is not enough time to read, review, and connect the reading to bigger course related topics.

5. Try it out!

Now that you know some great strategies to use for your reading assignments, you can practice:

- a. Find a textbook or article that is assigned for class, but that you haven't started reading yet.
- b. Practice your **preview** skills. Take 3-5 minutes to preview the text and then write down:
 - The main idea or topic of the reading
 - Some supporting points that the reading covers
 - How the topic of the reading relates to the class as a whole or to key ideas discussed in class
- c. Practice your **annotation** skills. Take about a page and annotate while you read it through. Write down:
 - At least two key points you highlighted that shows support for the main topic
 - Any questions that you still have after the reading
- d. Practice your **review** skills
 - Highlight or underline answers to chapter questions to show your counselor
 - Find the most difficult section of the reading or a part you don't understand and work with your counselor to summarize the reading in your own words
 - Write in your own sub-headings for longer articles or blocks of text

HAPPY READING!