

THE READING PROCESS

As you start working on longer and longer reading assignments in college, you will find that memorization of the material will become important. Some college classes only require one or two comprehensive tests. Some tests will base their questions off of in-class notes, while others will base questions off of the content found in a textbook. Sometimes, you will see a mixture of in-class material and textbook material on an exam. The important idea is to read to remember the content. In order to do this, you may have to adapt an individualized reading process.

When reading a text (a book, an essay, or an article), you should really try to break up the practice into a three-phase operation.

1. Pre-Reading Phase
2. Reading Phase
3. Re-Reading Phase

Each of these steps contains sub-steps which you may use to adopt an individualized reading process. An individualized reading process is a survival skill which you will need to develop in order to pass more advanced coursework.

Alternatively, you may choose to add a phase: Post-Reading which we will discuss at the end.

Why have processes for reading?

The goals for reading for higher education coursework are usually: understanding and memorization.

Consider this fact: During your studies in higher education, you will run across at least one professor who will test using only the material from their textbooks. In order to survive, you must learn to read more diligently.

PRE-READING

This step involves skimming and reading more specific parts of the text.

1. Skim

If the text is a book, the reader should simply skim the text or “thumb through” the text looking at the book's features. Locate the different parts (tables of content, the locations of the chapters, any indices (or an index), any appendices (or an appendix, a section with extra material), and/or a glossary (a collection of terms from the book which are defined).

If the text is an essay/article, the reader should skim the text or “thumb through” the text and look for headings or subheadings (any bolded or highlighted sections of the text), any notes, and any appendices.

2. Read Topic Sentences.

It may be important to skim through the text reading the first sentences of the paragraphs. Most textbooks are written so that a topic sentence appears before any supporting sentences. Topic sentences contain the main ideas of the paragraph. Thus, reading topic sentences may provide a quicker way to understand the content of the paragraphs.

3. Read the Introduction and the Conclusion (to each section, chapter, etc). In many textbooks, the introduction describes the contents of the chapter/section. Likewise, the conclusion may recapitulate the important contents from throughout the chapter/section.

Some conclusions may contain “review” sections which outline the most important ideas in the chapter/section.

READING STRATEGIES

Reading a text sounds easy enough; however, when the goal is to understand and attempt to retain some of the ideas from the text, things tend to become a bit more complicated.

1. Reading (Passively)

If you simply read the text, you are reading passively.

1.1. Read Aloud.

1.2. Read to Yourself.

1.3. Read Aloud and Record the Audio.

Sometimes, reading a session into an audio recorder may help you to study. Consider this: You may be able to listen to yourself reading the passage over and over, which may help you to remember it.

2. Reading (Actively)

If you read the text and take notes while reading, you are reading actively. All-in-all, you want to make the process of reading an active activity rather than a passive activity whenever possible. By active, we mean that you want to take time and energy to become engaging in learning the concepts in the text rather than simply reading the text more or less robotically without doing anything to attempt to draw attention to important ideas.

You see, a person can simply read a text and not remember anything from the text. So, we want to embrace the concept of making notes. Writing down any important ideas or terms.

2.1. Highlight Important Items

Additionally, you may find it important to try to use a highlighter or some other writing implement to underline/highlight important information in the text.

2.2. Make Marginal Notes

Marginal notes: Some people like to make what we call “Marginal notes,” referring to the extreme left or right of the page. Oftentimes, the page maintains enough space in the margins to write short notes or emphasize particular ideas.

If reading is important to understanding particular concepts (such as definitions, concepts, biographic information or other information), then it may be important to actively search for those concepts or the information as you read and make notes.

2.3. Define terms.

Search for the definition of words that you do not know. Better to have some form of understanding than misunderstanding.

RE-READING STRATEGIES

Re-Reading means to read the text again. Sometimes, you can read just the text, just the notes, or both items together.

1. Re-Read (passively)

Simply Re-Read the text (passively).

2. Re-Read (passively)

Re-Read your notes (passively)

3. Re-Read and Record the Audio.

Re-Read your notes aloud and record the audio. Again, listening to yourself read your notes aloud may help you to remember the notes.

4. Re-Read (actively)

Simply Re-Read the text and your notes.

POST-READING STRATEGIES

4.1. Index Cards

Make index cards of important terms, times, names, etc. Review these cards for the purpose of studying when necessary.

4.2. Listen to Any Recorded Sessions Repeatedly.

That is, listen to your recorded readings or notes over and over. Listen to the recordings while you do other things (e.g., working out, doing your laundry, cooking, riding public transportation, etc.).

MULTIPLE EXPOSURES MAY HELP YOU TO RETAIN TEXTUAL KNOWLEDGE

The more exposures you have with the material that you read, the more you will remember it.

Consider how people become better at sports or how people learn to play musical instruments. Everything has to do with practice and repetition. The more you do

something or repeat something, the more familiar it is. Thus, you should try to maximize the number of exposures you have with the material that you need to read.

Pre-Reading or Skim = 1 Exposure

Reading Aloud and Recording It (Passively) = 1 Exposure

Reading (Actively) = 1 Exposure

Re-Reading Notes = 1 Exposure

Making Index Cards and Studying Them = +1 Exposure (each time you study)

Listening Back to the Recorded Session = +1 Exposure (each time you listen)