

General Reading Strategies

Read with a Purpose

Before you even pick up a book or article, it helps to ask yourself why this text or unit is important to your class. Why is this topic significant? Am I using this text to support an argument I'm making in a research paper? What do I most need to get out of this reading? How does this reading relate to other course materials?

How can I be an active reader?

When we have to read a lot of information each week, actively engaging with each text helps our brains process and retain more knowledge. Here are some tips for active reading:

- **Preview** elements of the text (see right)
- **Take strong notes** - don't annotate every word, but write down questions, connections, and ideas that come up as you're reading.
- **Minimize distractions** - find a quiet study space with access to good light, and pay attention to how background noise or music affects you.
- **Look up words** you don't know to build your vocabulary and clarify precise meanings.
- **Teach or explain** a concept to a friend, relative, or roommate.
- **Check your comprehension** afterwards; some textbooks may include post-reading questions.

What Should I Preview?*

Key words & bolded words
Titles, headings, subtitles
Illustrations, graphs, charts, visuals
Vocabulary lists, glossaries
Chapter & unit introductions
End of chapter summaries
Review questions & practice problems
Special interest boxes & marginal notes

Tips for Reading Large Amounts

- **Read the abstract first, then the conclusion/results.** You'll go into the text with a sense of what the author's main argument is. Use this to sort out relevant information and to understand the main takeaways.
- **Record your own responses.** Take notes on your own questions and reactions that come up while you're reading. Maybe you *love* or *hate* a certain novel or article - why do you think that is? What elements in the text contribute to your emotional reaction?
- **Use the highlighter sparingly.** Resist the urge to over-highlight or mark up every line. Try to finish the whole page or section BEFORE taking notes - you'll be thinking critically about the contents and what's really important to the larger argument.
- **Build reading time into your schedule.** Cramming too many pages in a single sitting isn't the most effective way to build comprehension. Try to block off time to read every day and read in manageable chunks, like 5-10 pages.
- **Try a specific reading strategy.** Check out our TAEC handouts on reading comprehension strategies like Preview, Read, Recall and SQ3R!

*list from UNC Learning Center "Reading Textbooks Effectively"