

Effective Reading Skills:

How to make reading easier and remember what you read

Step 1: Plan before you read

1. Have a positive attitude about reading – I know, this sounds ridiculous. BUT, if you focus on how reading your textbook or assignment will make you more knowledgeable and perform better in the class, you will open your mind. This clears your brain and will help you to remember what you are about to read. Whatever you do, DON'T say to yourself, "This is stupid, I don't need to know this" before you read. When you say these words to yourself or others, you are subconsciously blocking the mind's ability to retain the information.
2. Create a "Distributive Reading Schedule" – read no more than 5-6 pages per sitting, depending on the length of the chapter or material you are reading.

Step 2: Get started

1. Review what you have previously read – Engage "Prior Learning"
2. Preview what you are about to read BEFORE you start reading. This should take you no longer than 5 minutes. Before you read, you should take a quick look at the following:
 - Table of Contents
 - Chapter Titles or Headings
 - Chapter Objectives or Focus Questions
 - Special text formatting (CAPITALS, *italics*, **bold**, etc.)
 - Charts/Graphs in the Chapter
 - Chapter Summaries (these are usually at the VERY end of the chapter).
 - What is the purpose of what you are reading? Focus on titles of chapters and headings for clues about the main idea of what you will be reading. For example, the title of the chapter may be, "The United States Becomes a World Power." This chapter would likely be about the United States involvement in international affairs, wars, etc.
3. Create a list of questions – change the chapter subtitles into questions – this works great with an outline note format.

Step 3: While you read

1. Read in **chunks** – this means that you read and process a grouping of words at a time (like a sentence) rather than focusing on one word at a time.

EXAMPLE:

- DON'T do this – If* you* read* in* chunks * you* will * increase * your * speed and reading* comprehension.
- INSTEAD, do this – If you read in chunks* you will increase your speed * and your comprehension

2. Concentrate on reading faster – don't struggle over what you read, grasp the main idea and move on – establish "flow" when you read.

3. Pause periodically to summarize what you read

- Do this by paragraph or by section in the text.

4. Answer the questions that you wrote before you read – (during the "Getting Started" process) when you phrased chapter section titles into questions – answer these questions.

5. Mark notes in your textbook – short summaries in the margins – sentences, create diagrams, make charts. If you do not own your textbook, so this in a notebook that has a section created specifically for textbook reading.

6. Take notes while you read – create a chapter outline by listing the title of the chapter, then the main headings, then subheadings.

7. LOOK UP THE DEFINITION OF WORDS THAT YOU DO NOT KNOW!! If necessary, create a list of terms and definitions in your notes or on notecards.

Step 3: When you are done reading

1. Think about what you read – identify the main ideas, and form an opinion about the authors ideas and/or what you read in general (again, do not just mindlessly say, "this was stupid." Force yourself to think about hat you read and summarize it in your mind.

2. Reread difficult passages

3. Read the parts that you marked or highlighted out loud

4. Talk about what you read – explain the main ideas of the chapter to a friend or classmate. This is especially helpful if you can find someone who just read the same thing that do did. If not, find any friend who is willing to listen to you