

Tips for Academic Success

Reading Strategies for College Courses

Reading for college courses is very different than reading for pleasure. The following strategies are recommended to assist you with textbook and scholarly reading material.

Preview Your Reading Material

- Use your syllabus as a guide to determine why the reading was assigned.
- Do a quick internet search of the main idea or terms to understand the context.
- Read the table of contents, chapter introduction, and summary for familiar concepts to link new information with material you know already.

Adjust Your Reading Accordingly

- Reading speed should be done to fit the purpose of the assignment. Before you begin reading, ask yourself if you need to read for main ideas, details, or for application. Then skim or read in-depth to fit the purpose.
- Look over visual aids such as charts, graphs, pictures, cartoons, and illustrations to help clarify points.
- Adjust for learning style. Visual learners may want to read before class while auditory learners may find it helpful to read after hearing the lecture.

Break It Up

- Sometimes the reading is so complex that you need to section it off. If this is the case, read an entire selection before stopping; then re-read it for clarification.
- After re-reading, take a moment to quiz yourself on the material you have just read and then review the sections that are still unclear or confusing to you.

Take Notes

- After reading a section or paragraph, write a summary of the material in your own words.

Mark Up Your Text

- Don't be afraid to write in the book. Break down technical language into your own words, underline information supporting the main idea, and write connections between ideas in the margins.
- Use a marking system. For instance, you could use brackets to note main ideas, underlining to show support information, and circles to identify key terms.

Be Patient

- Remember if information is new or complex, you may not fully understand it the first time. You may need to read it several times for comprehension.

You are now reading this

in my voice

Schedule an appointment with an Academic Resources staff member to discuss effective strategies to use with your reading assignments.
Call 216-368-3478 or stop by Sears 340.

STUDENT ADVANCEMENT

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Effective and Efficient Reading Strategies

How you read for a particular course depends a lot on your background, on the course, on whether the professor reviews the textbook material during lecture, on the type of exams, etc. Fortunately, there are some general strategies for increasing your comprehension and reading rate that work for almost any course.

Preview

- Preview your reading material by looking over the chapter introduction, summary, or detailed table of contents. You will read more quickly if you know what to expect. Previewing helps set those expectations and prepares you for class, lecture, or discussion.

Set a Time Limit

- Set a time limit to complete your reading assignment, and read to meet that goal. You will read more efficiently when you have a set time limit.

Annotate

- Use an annotation system as a way to stay focused.
- Marking up your textbook will not help you remember what you read, but it can help you maintain your focus while reading.
- Use a pen rather than a highlighter to underline so that you can also make notes in the margin when you want to clarify a difficult point.
- Use an underlining system. For instance, you could use brackets to note main ideas, underlining to show support information, and circles to identify key terms.

Read by Chapter Section

- Read an entire chapter section before you stop reading. Sometimes the reading is so complex that you need to break it up. If this is the case, read an entire section before stopping.

Review

- Review your notes before you start another section. You will remember more of the information if you stop to review when you finish a section.

Reading for Science and Math Courses

- In many science and math courses, you may be tempted to read just the sections that help you solve the homework problems. While you are completing your homework, you are not really learning the material. You will not be ready for the exam without a lot of review. Instead, take some time at the beginning of each unit to learn the material by thoroughly reading the textbook assignments.