

Textbook Reading



Reading, reading, reading, and more reading. The life of a university student involves lots and lots of reading. A typical week may involve reading one chapter of a textbook, per class, which totals 5 chapters a week. How can you do this?

Reading well is one of the most important skills that you need. Good reading skills will help you understand, learn and remember new material and they also help you write better.

Why do the reading?

The goal of reading at university is to learn new concepts, extract main ideas, become familiar with new vocabulary and learn information about a topic. Getting the reading done **before** the lecture will help significantly with note taking during class, understanding the professor and remembering information.

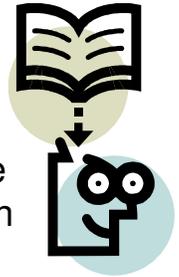
Scheduling Reading

Start reading as soon as you get the textbook! It is very difficult to catch up on reading once you fall behind.

Reading should be scheduled into your week. Block times during the week when you are going to focus on reading. When creating a reading schedule, remember that it often defeats the purpose to sit and read an entire chapter at once. There is no point spending 2 hours reading an entire chapter if you only remember the last 2 pages! Divide up a chapter based on the number of pages, your familiarity with the topic and also your attention span. If you can only really focus for 30 minutes of reading, then don't make yourself read for longer than that. You won't remember what you read, which ends up being a waste of time.

Reading should be done in a **distraction-free area**. This means no TV, radio, instant messaging, etc and it certainly does not mean reading in the middle of a noisy cafeteria!

SQ4R – A Reading Strategy



The key to being a good and successful reader is to make reading an **active** process, instead of simply passively moving your eyes along the page. You need to work at understanding what you are reading, search for main details, link ideas together, and understand new vocabulary. The goal is to try to do all of this while only reading the chapter once. You don't have time to re-read.

The following reading strategy can help you become a more active reader.

S – Survey

Preview the chapter before reading it. Read the introduction to get an idea of what will be covered in the chapter. Scan the headings and subheading, pictures, graphs, etc. Get a feel for what the chapter is about and also how long you expect it to take to read. Divide the chapter into sections.

Q – Question

Before reading, turn the headings and subheadings into questions that you will try to find the answer to while reading. Write them down. This makes reading more active because you are doing something with the information.



An example of a heading you might find in a Sociology text is “Ethnocentrism”. Turning this into a question could give you “What is ethnocentrism?”. If ethnocentrism was a subheading under the heading “Culture”, the question could be “What is ethnocentrism and how does it affect culture?”.

R – Read



Now it is time to read! While reading a section, try to answer the question you created. Look for main ideas, new vocabulary and try to link information with other things you have learned so far (from the prof's lectures and the text). Don't just passively move your eyes along the lines of the page. **THINK** about what you are reading and what it means.

R – Recite/Rephrase

Once you have read a section and found the answer to your question (which should be the main idea of the paragraph/section), ask yourself if you understand it. The key to knowing if you understand or not is if you can *rephrase the idea in your own words*. If you can't do it, you probably don't have a good enough grasp of the concept. Read it over again and look at any examples that are provided.

R – (W)rite

Now write down the answer to your questions and any other important points that you feel are worth studying and remembering. Try not to just copy – put things in your own words. It is easier to remember something that is in our words than something that is in someone else's.



There is no need to write complete sentences. Use points as much as possible. One of the major goals of creating these notes is to condense the information as much as possible.

R – Review

Once you have pulled out the main ideas from the text and written them down, you no longer need the textbook. Spend your time reviewing the notes that you have made. It is much easier to work with a condensed version of the information.

Review your notes regularly so that you will not have to re-learn everything by the time the midterm and exam come along.

