**Steps to Effectively Reading Your Textbook**



mplete steps 1-4 as homework by the reading due date.

1. Pick the correct reading environment (see handout).
2. Pre-read.
   1. SKIM the graphics and headings.
   2. What are the focus topics for this reading?
   3. What do you already know about this topic?
   4. What are the key terms? (define these in your notes before completing the next step)
3. READ.
   1. From your pre-reading you should know the focus points of the reading. Now read with the following questions in mind:
      1. What are the topics?
      2. What is significant about each topic?
      3. How is each topic related to other topics and topics in this section?
      4. STOP after each subsection and take notes IN YOUR OWN WORDS that convey the answers to the above questions. (Do NOT take notes as you read, but instead pause and then write down your notes for that section. This will also serve as a self-check to see if you have processed the information). Be sure you also pay attention to visuals!
      5. If you are unable to translate the section into your own words to answer the questions (i.-iii. above) then you don’t understand it. Re-read. Still confused? Write down **specific** questions to ask about this section during class.
4. Immediately after you read.
   1. Reflect on the reading.
      1. What is most important? Star or highlight the related notes.
      2. Reread your notes in full to make sure they are sufficient. Add notes as needed.
5. 1 day after reading- review.
   1. Reread your reading notes again within 24 hours of reading.
   2. The review should be short, but is ESSENTIAL to retaining the material.
6. 1 week after reading- review again.
   1. A few days after the material has been addressed in class go back to your notes and review them again. Relate them to class discussions and/or current events.

The Reading Environment



There are many things which can interfere with effective reading. Some of these involve common sense, and can be easily changed. Others are more subtle, and may require long and patient effort if they are to be overcome.

Something which most people can control rather easily is their reading environment. A poor physical setting can make reading far more difficult than it has to be, and yet a little planning can get around most of the harmful elements you may find. It is a question of motivation. We usually can do what we really want to do!

* **Lighting**. Often it is helpful to do your reading- the bulk of it, at least- in the same place. Check the lighting there. Is it adequate? You should be able to see the page without strain. Does the light create a glare, or are you in the habit of reading in the direct sunlight? Either extreme-too much light or too little- can cause strain and fatigue, and lower your reading efficiency.
* **Ventilation**. Stuffy rooms put you to sleep. You should have plenty of fresh air(but not a draft) and the temperature should be fairly cool. Otherwise, you'll find yourself going to sleep over the most exciting books.
* **Reading Position**. Your position should be neither too comfortable nor too uncomfortable. The first condition puts you right back to sleep again. In fact, some people "read themselves to sleep" in bed every night- which is fine if sleep, rather than reading, is what you're after. An uncomfortable position can create a strain, however subtle, which results in fatigue.
* **Focal Distance**. Hold your book at an angle and keep it about 18 inches from your eyes. Remember: Long arms are not a substitute for corrective lenses. If you need glasses, wear them while you read. Persistent fatigue while studying or reading might be Nature's way of telling you that glasses are needed. Have an optometrist check your close-range vision.
* **Distractions.** Most important, what about distractions you can see and hear? No matter what you think, tests show that you can only pay attention to one thing at a time. If you sit near a door or window, every movement will claim your attention. If you have a radio or record player going, your concentration may continually wander from book to sound. And reading with the television going combines the worst of all possible distractions.

Give yourself every break. If you are going to read, prepare things so you can read unhindered. If there is something more important, put the book aside. There are times to read and, just as definitely, there are times when reading must give way to other considerations.

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