

STRATEGIC READING

How do you approach your assigned readings? Many students simply read through the material once and believe that they are done as soon as they reach the last page. However, understanding assigned readings takes a lot more than passively flipping through a chapter and reading words. Students who successfully complete a reading task can typically summarize what they read and apply the knowledge on tests. Below are strategies to use before, during, and after a reading task to help you get the most out of your assigned readings.

BEFORE

Before you start reading, plan ahead and create a context for the new information being learned (Sellers, Dochen, & Hodges, 2015).

PLANNING TO READ

The following steps will help you get off to a good start before you actually read:

- Gather assigned materials.
- Set aside reading time when alert.
- Decide whether you need to read before or after the lecture.
- Choose what you are going to read and for how long.
- Have deliberate intention to learn.
- Find a place that supports your concentration.
- Ask, “What does the instructor expect me to learn?”



CREATING A CONTEXT

If you recall the prior knowledge you have about the content before you read, you will be able to anchor the new information in a context that is familiar to you. This will help you understand and remember the information easier. The following steps will help you create a context.

- Look at the assigned text’s title or book’s chapter title, topic outline, headings, diagrams, and illustrations to get a sense of where the text is going.
- Locate the article/chapter summary and read it twice.
- Determine the primary questions that the text is answering.
- Relate what you have seen to your prior knowledge. What do you already know about these questions? What interests you about these questions?
- Decide the how deeply you need to read this text based on your prior knowledge, interest, and course expectations.

DURING

While you are reading, comprehending the material and keeping your concentration are two important tasks (Sellers et al., 2015).

COMPREHENDING MATERIAL

Annotation

Annotation refers to marking up the text. This is not just highlighting or underlining anything you think is important: if you mark too much text, the process becomes useless. Below are strategies for effective annotations (A reader's guide to annotation, n.d.; Sellers et al., 2015).

- Read to understand the material first, and then mark the primary points.
- Be selective when marking text. Consider marking text in order to
 - summarize important ideas in your own words;
 - add examples;
 - define new words;
 - note passages that are confusing using question marks;
 - write questions that you have about topics in the margin;
 - comment on what is going on in the text;
 - draw pictures to make a visual connection;
 - make lists.
- Use different symbols, such as brackets, broken lines, asterisks, circles, or boxes, for different reasons. For example, a different symbol can be used to mark important ideas, phrases, people, or places.
- Be sure to look over any charts, graphs, or boxed inserts.

The Cover Letter *what should be in it?*

To get your resume noticed, you'll need an ace cover letter that accompanies your resume. You might think the best cover letter would contain a curling arrow and a boldface message reading "Resume Below," followed by a full line of exclamation points. *quick synopsis*

That might not be such a bad idea, but unfortunately this is not the kind of cover letter most employers have come to expect. ~~The cover letter is not the domain of the abstract-expressionist avantgarde existentialist career hunter.~~ *meaning?* Not as of this writing, anyway.

Basically, **a cover letter lets you do two things: herald your resume and lock down the interview.** *great way to take up resume* By taking your highlights and personalizing them, a good cover letter convinces the reader to pay attention to your resume. Therefore, take just as much care in preparing it as you do your resume. To make your cover letter visually appealing, print it on personalized stationery or at least good quality paper. Then briefly state your most compelling qualifications and **request an interview.** Also, be sure to mention the reason **why you'd like to work for the company.** *great idea!*

In short, the goals of your cover letter are:

1. To express interest in the **company and a specific position.**
2. To engage the **reader's interest** so he or she is compelled to read your resume. *3 goals for CL*
3. To mention a **specific date when you will contact** the employer, if he or she doesn't contact you.

Of equal importance, the cover letter provides you with the opportunity to discuss the company to which you're applying. Mention something specifically appealing to you about the prospective employer. This lets the "personal approach" work in two directions—yours and theirs. And it makes things much more interesting.

Comprehension Strategies

You should be constantly checking to see if you understand what you are reading. Otherwise, you could end up reading an entire assignment without taking away any useful information for a course. Use the strategies below to improve comprehension (Nicholson & Caverly, 2002; Sellers et al., 2015).

- Use the headings to help formulate questions about the material as you read. Questions provide purpose as you search for answers. After reading a section, see if you can answer the questions.
- Practice explaining what you understood from the reading.
- Quiz yourself by thinking up and answering questions about the text.
- Outline the text.
- Connect ideas from your own experience to what you read.
- Visualize what the author was writing.
- Identify the purpose the author had for writing.
- Figure out the meaning of new words either by using context clues or the dictionary.
- Create a concept map or web of ideas.
- Summarize after reading a section.
- Separate main ideas from the details.
- Create examples from your experience to help your understanding.
- Put important ideas into your own words.
- Consider how the title relates to the rest of the reading.
- Look up information related to the reading from another source.
- Reread and try a different strategy.



KEEPING CONCENTRATION

Pacer Technique

- Horizontal Pacing - Use your index finger, pen, pencil, or hand to underline each line of text as you read. It will help you focus your attention, adjust your reading speed to match the difficulty of the text, and reduce the tendency to backtrack and read the same words twice.
- Vertical Pacing - Use a blank note card or bookmark to cover or uncover lines of text. Experiment with highlighting the edge of the card to sharpen focus.
- Combine the two methods if needed, especially when the text is difficult or boring, to keep your focus.

Sectioning

- Divide each chapter into small sections and set reading goals to reach in a specific amount of time.
- Focus your concentration and comprehension for 20 to 30 minutes to reach your goal. Take a short break, and then begin again.

AFTER

Most of what you have learned is forgotten right after you learn it unless you review. To help you remember the new information, use the strategies below (Sellers et al., 2015).

- Review as soon as possible and at least within the first day of reading the material.
- Create review strategies, such as chapter review cards, mapping, study guides, etc.
- Explain aloud what you understand from the text.
- Reflect about the material you have read by connecting new information to prior knowledge, identifying concepts you do not understand, and evaluating the importance of what you have read.
- Think on how this knowledge is linked to what you are learning in class.
- Continue briefly reviewing the material until test time.
- Summarize what you read.



Sources:

A reader's guide to annotation. (n.d.) Retrieved from <http://www.dsisd.txed.net/DocumentCenter/Home/View/14072>

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Sellers, D., Dochen, C. W., & Hodges, R. (2015). *Academic transformation: The road to college success* (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education.

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Spring 2014

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