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IMPROVE YOUR READING COMPREHENSION

Reading Comprehension Tips:

Read early in the day.

Most people are able to concentrate and retain more information earlier in the day than later at night, when they may be tired. When you are tired, your concentration and comprehension will decrease.

Read for short bursts.

Try to read for 35-40 minutes at a time, and then, take a short break. If you have this reading goal, it can serve as a motivator in trying to really focus on the material at hand. Try to make these "bursts" quality reading time.

Find a quiet location.

Try to avoid your residence hall room on campus as well as the lounge. There are too many distractions there that are not conducive for quality reading. Read away from family members, cell phones, computers and televisions.

Monitor your comprehension.

Ask yourself every once in a while, "What have I learned?" If you are having trouble answering this question, re-read the material, ask a classmate or a tutor for assistance, or ask the instructor for some clarification.

Try skimming the chapter first.

Take a look at the title page, preface, subtitles, the introduction and the chapter summary before reading the entire chapter. Previewing this information will help keep you focused on those topics.

Remember: College textbooks are designed to help you by providing:

MAJOR HEADINGS

Italicized/Bold Words

• Lists of Main and Bulleted Points

Repetition of Key Information/Facts

Summaries

What Type of Reader Are You?

Improve your reading and become a more “active reader” with the SQ3R Method.

SQ3R Method (Cornell Method):

1. **Survey:** Look over the chapter, and get an idea of what it will cover in order to ease your way into the reading assignment.
2. **Question:** Ask yourself “What is this chapter about?” and “What examples support the author’s point in the chapter?”
3. **Read:** Go over the material carefully. If you have any questions about vocabulary or concepts, write them down and review them after you finish that particular section. Continue assessing your reading to see if you understand the material.
4. **Review:** This point is extremely important. Try to do a review a couple of times each week. By reviewing, you will begin to see the larger picture of the main concepts introduced and to have better retention of the information. Think of this process as being similar to that of an athlete or a musician who continues to practice and gradually improves while preparing for a performance. The more you “practice” by reviewing the material, the better your understanding will be of that topic because you are “exercising” your brain.
5. **Recite:** Practice the material you are reviewing by saying it out loud. Oral reading and recitation helps immensely because you are utilizing both hemispheres of your brain.

Are You a Reader Who Likes to Use a Highlighter?

This technique can be an effective method but can often result in passive reading. Reading passively delays learning because you are continually re-reading the material highlighted, and you may have the tendency to become lazy and highlight most of your reading. Make sure you have a consistent method of highlighting. Some students prefer to dedicate specific colors to specific kinds of important material (i.e., key terms in pink and formulas in yellow). Never trust highlights or notes done by a previous user of the text book. You cannot be sure that they are reliable, and you might miss something important.

Are You Reading the Material for Hours at a Time Just to Get It Done?

Result: You become a lazy reader and develop a lower retention of the material. You do not really focus your attention on the critical points (i.e., you “zone out”).

For additional tips on improving your reading comprehension, refer to Kathleen McWhorter's *Guide to College Reading*, which is available in the Student Success Center. You may also see a Student Success Center tutor.