

Reading Strategies

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In college, reading should be viewed as a study strategy, rather than an end in itself. Aim to mine key information from a chapter right away, then apply study strategies to that information to learn it.

Reading Goal: Read the textbook thoroughly to extract the most important information—key terms, concepts, names, dates, processes, examples, explanations, evidence, supporting details.

Study Goal: Use a review strategy to learn this information: flashcards, flashcard app, outline, study guide, graphic organizer, reading journal. Spend most of study time on review.



Finding Key Information

Look for formatting clues in your textbook that highlight significant information.

1. Key points: headings, terms in **bold** or *italics*, boxed information, review questions
2. Visual representations: charts, diagrams, graphs, tables, timelines, maps
3. Summaries: introductory and concluding paragraphs, chapter goals or objectives, chapter reviews, 'check your understanding' boxes

Annotating and Marking Texts

Annotate = notate. Develop your own shorthand for textbook and lecture notes.

1. Abbreviate, leave out vowels.
2. Use symbols or pictures: + \$  % →
3. Prioritize key information with ! * ★
4. Use 1, 2, 3 to highlight and relate points in a list or steps in a series.
5. Highlight conclusions with = or deductive logic's therefore symbol. 
6. Put a ? by anything you don't understand or need to investigate further.
7. Create margin notes that identify key terms, names, concepts, dates.
8. Write reminders for class discussion, including points or questions you want to raise.
9. Highlight only the most important words. Too much is hard to read.

After annotating, transfer key information to your review strategy of choice.

Two Textbook Reading Methods

3R for Academic Survival

- R₁ **READ:** Read the chapter paragraph by paragraph. Re-read to answer, "What did the author say in this paragraph?" or "What is the main idea in this paragraph?"
- R₂ **RECORD:** Once you can describe what is in the paragraph, work to retain that knowledge by **underlining, annotating, taking notes in a notebook, and making flashcards.**
- R₃ **RECITE:** Cover up your notes and recite aloud. Repeat the information to yourself until you can easily recall it. Practice regularly to prepare for quizzes or exams.

SQ3R Method for Thorough Study

- S **SURVEY:** Look over material critically. Skim the chapter and look for topical/subtopical headings, key concepts and terms in bold, graphs/charts/diagrams, and review questions. Read the summaries at the beginning and end of each chapter/section. Try to anticipate what the author is going to say.

WRITE these notes on paper, in sequence; then look over these notes to get an overall idea or picture. This will help you to map out and understand the chapter.

- Q **QUESTION:** Instead of reading paragraph headings such as "Basic Concepts of Reading," change to read, "What are the Basic Concepts of Reading?" These questions will become "hooks" on which to hang the reading material.

WRITE these questions in your notes/flashcards. Look over the questions to understand the chapter's areas of focus. Try to answer each question before reading further.

- R₁ **READ:** Read with alertness, looking for answers to each question you created.

WRITE notes, in your own words, under each question. Focus on the main idea and any significant supporting details or examples.

- R₂ **RECITE:** Without looking at your book or notes, mentally visualize and summarize in your own words all key terms and concepts immediately upon completing the reading. This step forces you to check your understanding, and highlights what you do not know. The recall channels the material into a more usable form, and engages your mind actively for better learning. ****Note:** Spend most of your study time on the recall step.

- R₃ **REVIEW:** Look over your questions, answers, notes, and book to see how well you did at recall. Observe carefully the points stated incorrectly or omitted, and go over these points again until you can correctly recall them. Try to grasp the logical sequence of the entire concept, problem, or process. Finish with a mental picture of the whole.

Adapted from F.P. Robinson (1946), *Effective Study*. ©Academic Skills Center, Dartmouth College 2001