

How Can I Read More Efficiently and Effectively?

Reading is a very personalized strategy. How you read for a particular course depends a lot on your background, on the course, on whether the professor reviews the textbook material during lecture, on the type of exams, etc.

However, there are some general strategies for increasing your comprehension and reading rate that work for almost any course. These strategies include the following:

Preview your reading material by looking over the chapter introduction, summary, or detailed table of contents.

- You will read more quickly if you know what to expect. Previewing helps set those expectations and prepares you for class.

Set a time limit to complete your reading assignment, and read to meet that goal.

- You will read more efficiently when you have a set time limit.

Use an annotation system as a way to stay focused.

- Marking up your textbook will not help you remember what you read, but it can help you maintain your focus while reading.
- Use a pen rather than a highlighter to underline so that you can also make notes in the margin when you want to clarify a difficult point.
- Use an underlining system. For instance, you could use brackets to note main ideas, underlining to show support information, and circles to identify key terms.

Read an entire Chapter section before you stop reading.

- Sometimes the reading is so complex that you need to break it up. If this is

the case, read an entire section before stopping.

Take reading notes at the end of each section.

- Use your annotation as a guide for what to include in your reading notes.

Review your notes before you start another section.

- You will remember more of the information if you stop to review when you finish a section.

In many science and math courses, you may be tempted to read just the sections that help you solve the homework problems. In other words, you read your textbook as if it were a cookbook. You search for the information or “ingredients” needed to solve the problem that you are currently working on. When you find what you need, you move on to the next problem.

While you are completing your homework, you are not really learning the material. You will not be ready for the exam without a lot of review.

Instead, take some time at the beginning of each unit to learn the material by thoroughly reading the textbook assignments.