

# College Reading Strategies



Reading a college textbook should be approached differently than reading a magazine or novel. It is difficult to remember or even understand everything in a textbook chapter after one quick reading. If you approach your reading strategically, you will maximize retention of the material.

## **GENERAL TIPS**

- Read the chapter before the lecture. This will help you build a background on the topic.
- Preview the chapter before you read. Read the title, introduction, headings, and charts. A five-minute preview increases your comprehension of the reading material.
- Divide the chapter into readable chunks. A 50-page chapter is best read in five chunks of ten-pages each. This can increase comprehension and actually decrease the overall time spent reading.
- Mark the text or take notes as you read. This may include highlighting, underlining, or making notes at the end of a section.
- Stop to check your understanding at regular intervals. Look for connections between topics and ask yourself if you understand the reading.
- Stay with a section of material until you comprehend it. If you encounter a confusing or difficult paragraph, reread the material slowly. Try to verbalize and read aloud because hearing the words can help to clarify the information.
- Review what you read. When complete, take about ten minutes to review what you just read. You may want to summarize key information in the margin of the text.
- Use a reading system—some featured here. Try them out and choose the one that works best for you.

## THE P2R SYSTEM

You can get more out of the time you spend reading by using this easy, three-step approach. First, *preview* before you read. Second, take notes or mark the text as you *read*. Third, *review* important information.

### *Preview*

This step takes little time and effort, and most students can preview in about five minutes. First, you will read the title of the chapter and the introduction at the beginning. If the text does not include an introduction or structured overview, read the first two paragraphs. Next, page through the chapter reading the headings and glancing at pictures, tables, and graphs, but don't stop to read any of the text along the way. At the end, read the chapter summary or the last two paragraphs.

By previewing the chapter, you will gain general information about what the chapter is about and how it is organized. This will help you to understand the material, in fact, previewing can increase your comprehension by 10-20%.

### *Read Actively*

The second step of P2R is active reading in small chunks (ten pages at a time). This includes marking your text with highlights or margin notes. The main reason for marking your text is to condense the material so that there is no need to read the entire chapter again.

Highlighting is one method of marking the text. Read a section of text, then pause to reflect on what you just read. Go back and highlight any material in that small section that you think you will need to review before an exam.

Note taking is another method of text marking, and there are different ways to accomplish this. One, you can write a heading in a notebook and then jot important details below it. Another way is to write recall words or questions in the margin of the text. Finally, you may want to write brief summary statements.

### *Review*

After reading a ten-page chunk, you will review important information. There are many ways that you can review the material. One way is to summarize key points by writing three or four statements that you think summarize the main points of that section. Another way involves reciting the information. You can use the headings as a guide to try to recite the key points under each heading or you could recite notes that you wrote in the book.

## **SQ3R**

This is one of the most widely taught reading/study systems. SQ3R is an acronym for *Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review*. Some of these steps are similar to P2R, but the main difference is that steps are performed for each headed section rather than for ten-page chunks. This system is more time consuming, but many students find it very effective.

### *Survey*

Go through the chapter quickly looking at the title, introduction, headings, pictures, tables, and summary.

### *Question*

Before you begin reading, turn the first heading into a question. For example, the heading "The Nursing Process" could be "What is the nursing process?" Make sure you write this question down in a notebook. Throughout the reading, your question will be answered.

### *Read*

Read the text under the heading to find the answer to the question you created. Reading each section to discover the answer to your question will make your reading more active.

### *Recite*

When you finish reading a headed section, acknowledge the answer to the question you generated. Recite the answer using your own words. Do not look at the text while reciting. If you have difficulty, you can glance over a section again. Once you can recite the answer in your own words, write the answer under the heading question in your notebook, creating an outline.

### *Review*

After reading the entire chapter, read over the outline notes that you took while reading. Be sure to check your memory by covering your notes and challenging yourself to recite the information in your own words.

## **S-RUN-R**

Students may find this reading method useful because of its simplicity. S-RUN-R is an acronym for *Survey, Read, Underline, Notetake, Review*.

### *Survey*

Survey the entire chapter reading the title, introduction, headings, pictures, tables, and summary.

### *Read*

Before reading, write the first heading on a piece of notebook paper. Then, begin reading the headed section while thinking critically about the material.

### *Underline*

After reading each paragraph, consider the most important information and underline or highlight that information.

### *Notetake*

Once you complete the reading and underlining/highlighting for one headed section, go back to your notebook and take notes on key information. Summarize the highlighted content in your own words.

Continue by writing each heading, reading, underlining or highlighting, and taking notes for all headed sections of the chapter.

### *Review*

When you finish reading an entire chapter, review and recite your summarized notes.

#### Resources:

Van Blerkom, D. L. (2000). *College study skills: Becoming a strategic learner*. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.

Van Blerkom, D. L., & Mulcahy-Ernt, P. I. (2005). *College reading and study strategies*. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.

Wong, L. (2006). *Essential study skills*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.