

Academic Reading Workshop



Reflection questions:

1. What brings you here? What are you struggling with?
What are you hoping to gain?
2. What kinds of reading are you doing for your classes?
Why is the professor assigning each reading? What's the purpose?
3. What do we mean when we say....
 - a. "Skim" this text
 - b. Read critically
 - c. Write a response paper

True or false:

- a. Reading strategies differ by discipline.
- b. Professors expect you to understand everything in the reading.
- c. Skimming means reading more quickly.
- d. It is sometimes useful to read the conclusion of the text before reading the introduction.
- e. If you know all of the vocabulary in a text, you should be able to read it.
- f. It's good to read an entire text in a single sitting, so you don't lose momentum.
- g. Many students find it easier to read a printout of a text than an electronic copy.

Academic Reading Strategies

1. Preview text (alone or with classmates)

- a. Consider purpose for reading (To prepare for lecture? To write a response? Other?)
- b. Look at overall length, organization, headings, visuals, keywords/main concepts, etc.
- c. Reflect on your own background and prior knowledge and make some connections
 - i. Consider doing a short internet search if needed to build up your knowledge base if content is completely unfamiliar
- d. Predict what the overall argument(s) might be.
- e. Try to consider WHY this reading was assigned. What does it offer, in relation to the class overall?

2. As you read

- a. Notice (or form) sections in the reading.
- b. Consider the best sequence of reading: (Intro/conclusion first?)
- c. Try to identify main arguments, thinking about the “new” perspective this author brings
 - i. In other words, What is s/he saying? and Why does it matter?
- d. Engage physically with the text (margin notes and symbols, underlining,)
OR
Make a “double-entry” journal with quotes/main points and reactions
 - i. Try to have at least one note, marking, or comment per page
- e. Test yourself at various points: See if you can summarize the author’s main points and offer some kind of response/reaction.
- f. Take breaks as needed (usually brain efficiency peaks within 15-20 minutes)
- g. DON’T look up every word you don’t know
- h. DON’T try to memorize everything in the reading
- i. DON’T worry if you only understand parts of the reading
 - i. See “Tips for Difficult Reading Passages” (separate handout)
 - ii. Remember: Confusion is the first step toward understanding!!

3. After you read

- a. Try to predict what concepts, points, examples, etc. might be brought up in discussion
- b. At minimum, try to come out with...
 - i. 3 main points or concepts
 - ii. 2 comments or connections
 - iii. 1 question
- c. Re-evaluate your strategies over time
 - i. Are you able to meet your goals? (to participate in class discussion, write the response paper, use the reading in another way...?)
 - ii. Consider using different strategies with different kinds of readings

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Academic Reading Worksheet

PREVIEW and CONNECT: [*purpose, genre, features, main topics, essential terminology, etc.*]

PREDICTIONS

(set-up for notetaking):

Page/ section	Main Idea, Quote, or Concept	Reaction or Question

OVERALL: (observations, comments, questions):

3 - 2 - 1 Active Reading Strategy (when reading to prepare for class discussion)

Title of text	Author(s)	Class or Date

3 Main Points or Concepts:	Page # (optional)
1.	
2.	
3.	
2 Comments or Connections <i>(to other ideas in the class, another class, or to your own life):</i>	
1.	
2.	
1 Question <i>(something that you don't understand or that would be good to ask in a class discussion):</i>	
1.	

Dealing with difficult reading passages:

Individual words/sentences

- Look for clues in the rest of the sentence/paragraph
- Mark '?' and move on (or return later)
- Don't linger too long! You can always skip a passage (particularly if it's not that long).

Short sections

- Adjust reading speed
- Read aloud
- Identify key words
- Focus on first and last sentences of paragraphs
- Make personal connections to anything in the text
- Consider WHY you don't understand. Is it...
 - a key word/concept (maybe Google it)
 - the structure (look for subject/verb)
 - too abstract? (try to make a connection)
 - boring or repetitive? (keep reading and look for connections)
- Bring questions to class to ask peers and/or instructor

Most of the text

- Make sure you preview
- Map out the text—at least know keywords and topics
- Make your own Reading Log: main point/concept + comment/question/connection
- Don't be afraid to read secondary sources
- Don't give up—try to get at least a few points from the text!