

How to Read a Textbook

Just like listening and learning, there are two types of reading as well: active reading and passive reading.

Passive reading is what you do for fun. You may be interested in the subject, and enjoy the reading, but there is not an effort done to absorb and critique the material.

Active reading is much more involved than passive reading. When you actively read something, you include many higher-order thinking processes such as organizing information, critiquing, and memorizing. All of this is done so that the reader can absorb, comprehend, and integrate this information.

Reading college text books requires active reading, but for many students this is a new concept.

Textbook Tips

- How important is the textbook?
 - It is important to know how important a textbook is for each of your classes. A book serves many functions. Sometimes the entire course content can be found in the book. In others it is only supplemental. In order to know the amount of time and weight you should put on readings for each class, talk with your professor and read your syllabus. Some classes will require a lot of time spend absorbing the reading material, others may allow you to take a more passive route.
- Organize your readings.
 - Divide up your reading goals. If you tend to get distracted reading long readings, break up a long reading into several smaller readings.
 - Look at the natural breaks in the chapter. Many times chapters are separated into smaller sections. Go through and mark where you will take a reading break. Before your break, take a few minutes to summarize what you read. Do something active during each of your breaks. You can spend five minutes on Facebook, texting your friends, unloading the dishwasher, or even taking a quick walk.
 - Once you have finished reading, review the material at least twice. The more time that you review something, the more likely you are to retain it.
- Look at the pictures
 - Before you read a chapter, take time to introduce yourself to the chapter. This is the same concept as seeing the preview to a movie before you actually go to it. Look at the pictures and read the captions. Survey the table of contents and any charts and graphs that the chapter may have. Take time to look at the chapter introduction and summary. Looking at

this information first will give you a better idea of what information the chapter wants to make sure you understand when you finish reading.

- Question yourself
 - When you are previewing the chapter, ask yourself questions about the content. If you challenge yourself with questions you will give yourself something to look for while reading. Notice when the author has bolded or italicized something and question why this was done. Questioning yourself is another way to make sure you are integrating the reading into your learning experience.
- Take notes and highlight
 - Actively reading includes taking notes and highlighting. When you have questions or feel the need to summarize something, use the margin to take notes. Highlight information is another way to stay focused and help you identify and remember important information. When highlighting, it is also important to remember not to overuse the highlighter.

SQ3R is a very helpful way to study textbooks

SURVEY: Preview the information- look at the pictures, read the introductions, look at the bullet points.

QUESTION: Ask yourself questions about what you are reading. *Why is this important? What does this mean?*

READ: Do the reading- remember to break this up into smaller chunks.

RECITE: Stop every-so-often and recite to yourself what you just read. Sometimes it helps to stop and jot this down in the margin or on another sheet of paper.

REVIEW: After you have read, review the main ideas of the reading. Review this information at least two times within 24 hours. The more you review something, the more likely you are to remember it.

SQ3R Method adapted from Robinson, Francis Pleasant. (1970) *Effective study* (4th ed.). New York: Harper & Row.