

## Success Tip: Reading College Textbooks

### What do we know about college textbooks?

- They are “idea dense”
- They include many ideas, facts, terms, diagrams, resources, and more
- They are generally written at a higher reading level than high school textbooks, and
- Students have less time to digest the information (courses are more fast-paced and cover more material than high school)

### *Did you know that reading involves both physical and mental preparation?*

#### The goal of reading:

- Comprehension
- Understanding
- Assimilation
- Remembering the material (learning the concepts beyond the point of recognition)

### *To reach these goals you must be an active reader.*

### Active reading involves thinking about the material as you read it. Use your textbook to do the following for each assigned reading.

- Preview the section to be covered in lecture (preview=skim, read headings and vocab words, look at diagrams, do this in 20-30 minutes)
- Go to class (take notes, have textbook handy)
- After class, complete the full reading (take breaks if the section/chapter is long)
- Take notes to indicate important information
- In a second full reading, **highlight** and/or underline
- Use end-of-chapter summaries and questions provided in the textbook to check understanding of the material
- Turn headings into questions and answer the questions as a way to quiz yourself

The following sections outline a variety of reading techniques. Some of the techniques are for specific types of textbooks/courses. Keep in mind that not every technique works for every student. Try each technique to see which works best for you.

# Reading Strategy P2R (Preview, Read, Review)

## 1) **PREVIEW** for approximately 15-20 minutes

### Preview the chapter and focus on:

- Headings
- Bold print (i.e., vocabulary terms)
- Pictures, tables, and graphs
- Chapter summaries
- Questions at the end of the section/chapter

### Ask yourself:

- What aspects of the reading look familiar?
- What will be difficult to grasp?

## 2) **READ** (actively)

- Question what you are reading while reading
- Think: What are the important points? What are the supporting details?

### Read for 20-30 minutes at a time (reading for longer makes it difficult to focus)

- Take short breaks, no more than 5-10 minutes

### Marking in the textbook

- When you come across an idea you do not understand, make a note in the margin so you can ask a question in class or visit the professor during office hours

### What is important to know about highlighting, underlining, and note-taking?

- Avoid over-highlighting, wait until the second read-through
- Highlight and/or underline only after you have read a paragraph
- Highlight or underline from left to right so that you read the sentence or key phrase again

## 3) **REVIEW**: When you have completed the reading, do not immediately close the book

- Summarize the main point in your own words
- Make a list of terms and definitions
- Make a review sheet for each section or major concept that can be used for exam preparation
- Make flashcards for difficult concepts or processes
- Draw out each step of a process as a concept map to help visualize what is happening
- Use the headings as questions and answer them as if they were test questions
- If there are sample questions at the end of a text, answer them
- If there are online tools (i.e., website), use a resource to test yourself

## **Reading Strategy: SQ3R** **(Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review)**

**The SQ3R is similar to the P2R strategy. For individual steps, see above.**

- The steps are performed on each section rather than at the end of a chapter
- The process is effective for more complex material, but is time consuming
- Because these steps are performed more frequently, SQ3R provides a great deal of interaction and repetition with content

## **Reading Strategy PRESP** **(Preview, Read Examples, Summarize, Problems)**

**This strategy is best used with math or math-based science textbooks:**

- Have pencil and paper ready to organize information and work on problems
- Break the reading into small chunks
- Work for 20-30 minutes at a time

### **1) Preview the section/chapter, focus on:**

- Headings
- Figures
- Examples
- Questions
- Key Terms
- Summaries at the end of each section/chapter
- What do the homework problems look like?

### **2) Read actively, focus on:**

- Laws
- Definitions
- Theorems
- Equations
- Processes

**Write topics on flash cards or create a review sheet for each major concept. Work on example problems:**

- Copy the problem and solve it
- Check your answer and solution method with the text
- Do you understand each step?
- Can you work backwards to check the answer?

**3) Summarize, look at the review sheets and explain each of the following in your own words:**

- Major law
- Rule
- Theorem
- Equation
- Definition
- Process

**4) Do the assigned homework problems that go with the reading:**

- Use your review sheet
- If you get stuck, re-read the associated section and example problem(s)
  - Ask the professor in class or go to office hours for clarification