

Reading Effectively

When preparing to read a text, it is important to set your own agenda. Think about how important the text is to you. You might determine this by deciding whether you will use the text for a paper or whether you may be quizzed or tested on the material you read. You might learn well from text, or you might learn more from lecture. All of these factors in when you decide whether to read for the big picture, or for detail.

Read for the Big Picture:

- Think about the topic of study before beginning to read.
- Formulate questions that can guide your reading.
- Obtain a preliminary rapid impression of a book (title, author, year book was written, preface, table of contents, manner of presentation, etc.)
- Read rapidly through the whole assignment.
- Go beyond the book. Make connections to other texts or current events.
- Make note of the important points as you read.
- Be critical in your acquisitions of knowledge.

Read for Details:

- Keep the purpose of the reading in mind as you read.
- Be sure you have the main thought of each paragraph.
- Vary the rate of your reading. It's okay to slow down for important points.

Think critically as you read:

- Draw your own conclusions.
- Is the writer citing facts accurately? Do the conclusions agree with your own independent views?
- Find illustrations and applications of the points being made. What are the implications of the author's view?

Record the main thought of each division of your reading. It's okay to argue with the text.

- Make a mental (or written) outline of the material as you read.
- Organize your notes under major questions, and do your reviewing by repeatedly testing yourself on these questions.