Active Reading and Improving Reading Comprehension

Many college students discover that there is significantly more to read in college than there was in high school. Students frequently remark that they do not have enough time to read through all of their assignments during the week. Use these tips to improve both the efficiency and comprehension level of your reading.

Utilize one of these Active Reading strategies to improve your reading efficiency.

SQ3R Method for Thorough Study

Step 1: Survey—Look over material critically. Skim through the book and read topical and subtopical heading and sentences. Read the summaries at the end of chapters and books. Try to anticipate what the author is going to say. Write notes out in sequence. Then, review the notes as a whole to preview where you are “going” with this reading.

Step 2: Questions—Instead of reading paragraph headings such as “Basic Concepts or Reading,” read it as “What are the Basic Concepts of Reading?” these questions will become “hooks” to anchor the information you read. Write out these questions. Look over the questions to see the emphasis and direction the author is taking. Then, attempt to give plausible answers before further reading.

Step 3: Read—Read with smoothness and alertness to answer the questions. Write notes, in your own words, under each question. Take a minimum number of notes. Use these notes as a skeleton for additional information to be added.

Step 4: Recall—Without looking at your book or notes, mentally visualize, in your own words, the high points of the material immediately upon completing the reading. This forces you to check your understanding, channels the material into a natural and useable form, allows you to see what you do not understand and forces you to think about the material. NOTE: more time should be spent on recall than reading.

Step 5: Review—Look at your questions, answers, notes and book to see how well you did recall. Focus on the points recalled incorrectly or omitted. Carefully fix in your mind the logical sequences of the entire idea, concept, or problem. Finish with a mental picture of the WHOLE.

3 R’s for Academic Survival

R1: Read—Read the chapter paragraph by paragraph. Read and re-read until you can answer the question, “what did the author say in this paragraph?”

R2: Record—Once you are able to describe what is in the paragraph, you will want to retain that learning by underlining, or making notes in the margins or a notebook.

R3: Recite—Cover up your notes and recite aloud. Remember: if you cannot say it now, you will not be able to tomorrow in class, nor write about it in a week on an exam. While you still have a chance, try and try again, until you can verbalize what you read.
Strengthening Your Comprehension

Keep these factors in mind while you read for class.

Analyze the time and place in which you are reading
- Reading for several hours can cause mental fatigue. Take breaks.
- Reading where there are many of distractions can be counterproductive.

Rephrase each paragraph in your own words
- Stating the information in your own words will help you grasp it better.

Read aloud sentences or sections that are difficult
- Listening to yourself could help understand the information better.
- Do not hesitate to reread difficult or complicated sections
- Slow down your reading rate.

Write questions that will point you to the meaning of the section next to headings
- Refer to your questions often. Write down or underline the answers.
- Write a brief outline of major points.
- This will help you see the organization of the major ideas presented.

Underline key ideas
- This forces you to find the important information and helps with recalling information.

Write notes in margins

Determine if you lack background information
- Sometimes you may not know the background information about the text you are reading. Try and consult other sections of the text, reference material, or ask your professor for other sources.

In the chart below write down your courses and two reading techniques that you can use to help you succeed in that course.

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Resources

University Counseling Service
3223 Westlawn South
319-335-7294
ucs@uiowa.edu
http://counseling.studentlife.uiowa.edu/

Academic Support & Retention
310 Calvin Hall
319-335-1733
uc-swatprogram@uiowa.edu
http://uc.uiowa.edu/student-success/swat

Works Cited:
Www.sru.edu/academics/enrollment/academicservices/documents/college%20success%20resources/college%20success%20brochures/active%20reading.pdf