

# 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 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 of 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.

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## **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.

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

Course	Reading Technique #1	Reading Technique #2

## RESOURCES

University Counseling Service 3223 Westlawn South 319-335-7294 ucs@uiowa.edu <a href="http://counseling.studentlife.uiowa.edu/">http://counseling.studentlife.uiowa.edu/</a>	Academic Support & Retention 310 Calvin Hall 319-335-1497 tutoriowa@uiowa.edu <a href="http://tutor.uiowa.edu">http://tutor.uiowa.edu</a>
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Works Cited:

[www.sru.edu/academics/enrollment/academicservices/documents/college%20success%20resources/college%20success%20brochures/active%20reading.pdf](http://www.sru.edu/academics/enrollment/academicservices/documents/college%20success%20resources/college%20success%20brochures/active%20reading.pdf)

Adapted from F.P. Robinson. *Effective Study*. New York: Harper and Bros. 1946. Chapter II.

# TIME FOR PRACTICE!

Take a moment to read the following passage and apply the techniques you have learned

In 1855, the Pennsylvania legislature chartered the Farmer's High School. At the first trustees' meeting, the main order of business was obtaining a location for the school. The board considered proposals from five people who were willing to provide 200 or more acres of land. Among the offers was that of General James Irvin of Bellefonte, who could provide a 200-acre tract of land from his large holdings. All five locations were visited, and the committee ultimately accepted Irvin's offer after local citizens sweetened the deal pledging an additional \$10,000 for the school. An architect was hired to design the main building, a five-story stone structure composed of three wings, with rooms for up to 400 students, faculty living quarters and classrooms. With \$100,000 from various sources, construction began. Tuition and room and board charges were fixed at \$100 per year, and on February 16, 1859, 69 students arrived to begin their studies. The school's address was simply, "Farm School." In 1887, the first student newspaper was published. "Free Lance" was a monthly publication and sold for 15 cents. In 1941, the Nittany Lion Shrine was commissioned with the 1940 Class Gift. Heinz Warnake was selected to sculpt the Lion, and he worked on campus in full view of the students. It was completed in four months, carved from a thirteen-ton block of limestone. In the 1980s, a cast of the lion was made and stored in an undisclosed location after part of an ear was broken off. In 1947, Henry Varnum Poor finished the first of Old Main's frescoes, depicting the signing of the Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1862 that paved the way for Penn State's land grant mission of outreach to the citizens of Pennsylvania. In 1982, Penn State won its first NCAA football championship and a second in 1986 to celebrate its 100th anniversary in the sport. Penn State joined the Big Ten Conference in 1992 in all sports and to facilitate academic progress among the Big Ten institutions. In 1997, Penn State reorganized its Commonwealth Educational System. In its place, it established a "Commonwealth College" with 14 campuses and allowed the formation of three additional colleges: Berks-Lehigh Valley College, Abington College and Altoona College. These new academic colleges can establish a limited number of four-year baccalaureate programs that will benefit their communities.

## COMPREHENSION QUIZ:

1. **What did Penn State join in 1992 that also facilitates academic progress between Penn State and other institutions?**
  - A. NACC
  - B. Commonwealth Educational System
  - C. Big Ten Conference
2. **Who finished the first of Old Main's frescoes?**
  - A. James Irvin
  - B. Morrill Land
  - C. Henry Varnum Poor
3. **Penn State acquired land from which man?**
  - A. Heinz Warnake
  - B. General James Irvin
  - C. Five Different People