

SUCCESSFUL READING STRATEGIES FOR COLLEGE

YOUR READING STRATEGIES SHOULD CHANGE DEPENDING ON:

1. THE GENRE OF TEXT BEING READ

- Fiction
- Poetry
- Non Fiction-Expository
- Textbook
- Research
 - Quantitative
 - Qualitative

2. THE PURPOSE OF THE READING

- Pleasure
- Personal vs. Imposed
- Discussion/Seminar
- Writing a Paper
- Taking a test

3. YOUR BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE AND/OR EXPERIENCE WITH THE TOPIC

- The more experience you have with the topic, the more you can skim to look for main ideas/points
- The less experience you have, the more you may need to read whole passages—but read FAST to gain some experiential knowledge. (Slow reading brings you to the word level and impedes understanding of content so speed up but summarize.) If too complicated, check the Internet/kids' books to get background knowledge. Try Google Scholar. Need to bring something to the reading, create a bridge.

USE ACTIVE READING

- **Talk with the text**—ask yourself:
 - “is this the point I am looking for?” (Get context from the syllabus or program description—how does the text relate to the program questions?)
 - “how does this relate to what other authors have said?” Make connections to other reading.
 - “does this author agree or disagree with other authors?”
 - “how does this author answer the guiding questions of the program?”
 - “do I agree or disagree with this point?”
- **Reading Notes**—review syllabus, questions of program, write how this text, chapter, section ANSWERS the main questions of the program
- **Summary writing**
- **Marginal Notes**—make notations of relationships/reasons WHY you highlighted
- **Bookmarks and flagging** --be sure to make a note why you flagged it.
- **Use 3 color** highlighting--this is more active than regular highlighting. For example, use blue for stuff that answers program questions, green for info you disagree with, red for something for papers or seminar

8. Other

- **Read:** Avoid marathon sessions; plan breaks and set a reasonable goal. Reward yourself every hour with 5-10 minutes of break time. For difficult reading, set shorter goals. Read for a half hour, then break.
- **Recite:** Talk to yourself about what you read. Talk to others about what you read. Better yet: find a person in class who you trust and each of you split the reading up and teach each other your half of the reading. There are dangers involved in doing this...
- **Review:** Within one day of reading, review the material. Weekly, read over your notes or your highlighted portions.

USE EFFECTIVE SKIMMING

- **For expository texts:**
 - 1st and last chapters
 - 1st and last paragraphs of chapters
 - Chapter, Section Headings
 - 1st and last sentences in paragraphs
- **For fiction texts:**
 - Know the purpose of reading—What did the faculty say was the reason for reading this book?
 - Author style?
 - Genre?
 - Description?
 - Imagery? Figurative Language?
 - Characterization
 - Naming strategy
 - Character Maps
 - Dialogue
 - Point of View
 - AND.... If you don't KNOW the purpose of the reading, then ASK the faculty to tell you!

Tip: Set a timer for however long you can sit and pay attention (five, ten, thirty minutes...) and when the timer goes off, write or tell someone what you read—summarize it; then read again and repeat the process. You can gradually build up your stamina for reading, make connections and get the synapses firing. You have to think and be active as you read. Use writing, talking or drawing to create a conceptual understanding.

WAYS TO RESPOND TO READING

After reading a selection, try asking yourself these questions to write about:

1. What is the author trying to say?
2. What does this make me think about?
3. What emotions does it make me feel?
4. If I were talking to the author right now, what would I ask him/her?

Create a matrix of the essential questions of the program, and fill in the grid as to how each author answers the questions. This is particularly helpful for writing synthesis papers.

	Book 1	Book 2	Book 3	Book 4
Essential Q1				
Essential Q2				
Essential Q3				

When reading books for seminar, create a dialogue between authors. What would author of book 1 say to author of book 2? Would they agree? Disagree? Does one elaborate on the other's main point? Are they talking about similar issues from different disciplines? How might they inform each other's work?

HIGHLIGHTING is a passive activity that does not help comprehension unless you construct a CODE for doing so. If you highlight, write in the margins the REASON WHY you highlighted it. Alternatively, you can use tabs and write on the tabs of sticky notes as well.