

Reading Academic Texts Strategies

Overall

Read in drafts: readers often only partially comprehend an article on the first read, and this is completely normal. Here is a useful sequence for reading:

- First read: skim the whole article, circling terms and writing down questions
- Second read: read more carefully, take marginal notes (as you would when glossing). A reader's second time through will likely be more productive because of her familiarity with the landscape of the reading.

Before Reading

These strategies will help actively prepare for reading the text.

1. Define your purpose: Are you reading for information? To make an argument? Asking these questions could help make your reading process more efficient. If you're doing research, you might be looking for just one fact.
2. Preview: Get a sense of the landscape of the text. Locate information-rich sections, including places in text that provide a summary or overview. Look over a book to get a sense of layout and chapter content.

While Reading

These strategies will help actively engage with the text so that you better retain and understand information.

1. Underline or circle key terms: You can also compile key terms in a brief custom glossary.
2. Glossing: Take marginal notes such as writing a few words (or even just one word) that captures the paragraph and that might aid in recall of the content of the paragraph. The word(s) can be your own or from the paragraph.
3. Pause and think: It's ok to stare into space and reflect on what you've been reading. Do this occasionally so you don't allow yourself to get overloaded.
4. Note questions in margins: Doing this can provide a stay against confusion; on a second read, you might find that your questions are answered.
5. Double-entry notes (sample included): Draw a line down the middle of blank page. In the first column, record a direct quote or summarize an idea from the text that you think is important (include the page number). In the second column, you react to that quotation or idea. What questions does it raise in your mind? How does it relate to other ideas or readings we have covered? If the quotation or idea represents an assertion, do you agree or disagree? Repeat throughout the reading. Double-entry note-taking forces you to engage your reading from two angles: what the author is saying, and what you think about it.

Quotation or Summary	My Thoughts
<p>The author argues that people of color in “racially integrated schools” face more obstacles to achievement than those in less diverse schools (p. 10).</p>	<p>What exactly does the author mean by “racially integrated” schools? And where’s the evidence?</p> <p>I’m skeptical because I went to a diverse school, and there were more people of color than white students in honors classes. There was also a lot of encouragement among everyone to succeed.</p>

6. Read for rhetorical analysis: identify the writer’s purpose and the means by which she is attempting to achieve her purpose, and assessing how successful the writer was in this.
7. Read mindfully: read with an awareness of your level of engagement with the reading. If the method you are using is not working, step back and evaluate. Maybe you want to switch to skimming, or switch to reading line by line. Perhaps it’s time for a break.

After Reading

These strategies will help you solidify and clarify your understanding of the text

1. Consolidate notes: Compile your marginal notes on a separate page.
2. 25 word summary: Write a brief summary of an article or chapter
3. Sentence of purpose: Write a sentence in which you identify the author’s purpose.
4. Read for keeps: Create a brief record of every article and book you read helps make visible the intellectual capital you are acquiring in your courses. You can do this on paper or digitally using a well-organized notebook, Word documents, or software/apps like Evernote or Scrivener.