

Learning Assistance

at Trident Technical College

Ten Tips for Reading College Textbooks

Adapted from Orientation to College Learning, Diana L. Van Blerkom, Wadsworth Publishing Co.

<http://www.uwosh.edu/programs/readingstudycenter/>

- 1. Read the chapter before the lecture.** This will help you build background on the topic, learn the basic organizational structure of the material, and take better lecture notes.
- 2. Divide the chapter into readable chunks.** A 50-page chapter is probably best read in five chunks of around ten pages each. Dividing the chapter into smaller reading segments increases your comprehension and decreases the time you spend reading the chapter.
- 3. Be specific about when and where you will do your reading assignment.** Put it on your “To Do” list and choose times when you are most alert, usually during daylight or early evening hours. Select a location that is quiet, free of distractions, and well lighted (such as the library). A routine of time and place aids in concentration.
- 4. Space your reading.** Spread the ten-page chunks out over one or two days. Take breaks between sections or read one chunk in the morning, another in the evening, and the third chunk the next day.
- 5. Preview the chapter before you read.** Read the title, introduction, and headings, glance at charts and pictures, and read the summary. A two-to-five-minute preview reduces the total time you spend reading and increases your comprehension.
- 6. Turn chapter headings into questions before reading.** This will give you a specific purpose for your reading, resulting in better comprehension. For example, the heading “Causes of the Civil War” can be turned into the question, “What are the causes of the Civil War?” By reading to answer the question, your focus will be greatly improved.
- 7. Read with a pencil, NOT A HIGHLIGHTER, in your hand.** Underline or take notes at the end of each section. Wait until you finish reading the paragraph or small section before you begin to mark your text. Pencils let you put things in your own words. Highlighting merely marks the author’s words.
- 8. Monitor your comprehension.** Stop to check your understanding of the material at regular intervals. If the material is easy to understand, you may be able to wait until the end of each main division of the chapter to summarize what you have learned. If the text is difficult, you may need to pause at the end of each paragraph.
- 9. Review immediately what you read.** After you complete your reading assignment, take five to ten minutes (or more) to review what you just read before forgetting takes place. Develop a recall column or summarize the key information.
- 10. Prompt your memory.** Use the headings of your textbook or your notes to prompt your memory. Recite the information out loud or write it down. This will help transfer the information into long-term memory.

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