

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Program \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## HOW TO READ FOR INFORMATION

1. What do you need to know? Refer to document on second page.
2. PRACTICE TASK: Survey the document. Highlight bold section titles. Underline sub-headings. Write key word or phrase next to each section.
3. PRACTICE TASK: Revisit the questions at the end of the document. Write your answers to each question here.
4. How might these strategies be used in a work setting?

# Improving Reading Comprehension

Good reading comprehension comes only with practice. The basic aspects of reading, such as word recognition, phonetics and fluency, can be mastered in just a few years. However, throughout this process reading comprehension must be emphasized. Students may be able to eloquently repeat the words that they see on a page all day, but without reading comprehension skills, they're unable to fully understand the content, predict what will happen next, recognize characters, gain insight or understanding to build upon, or relate what they're reading to their own life's experience.

Sadly, classrooms across the United States have students who struggle with reading comprehension. They may be able to phonetically decipher words and sound them out, but that's the extent of their ability to read. They don't know what the words actually mean. They don't have the reading comprehension skills to fully grasp concepts, ideas and word phrases expressed in written text. Whether to gain understanding, develop a new skill, or for pure pleasure of reading, full comprehension of what you read is necessary. Reading comprehension is also imperative for a successful career and to excel academically.

Students frequently enter college without understanding how necessary good reading comprehension skills are for academic success. Those who grasp the information they read in textbooks earn better grades and experience far less stress than those who struggle to fully understand what they're reading. The following tips will enhance your ability to understand complicated concepts detailed in textbooks and improve your reading comprehension.

## Pre-reading survey

Before reading a text, complete a pre-reading survey for a brief summary of it. This will give you an idea of what to expect in the text, so your reading will be more productive. The first thing you should do in a pre-reading survey is read the introduction and review the table of contents. Next, read section and chapter headings and text highlighted with bold print. Throughout the process, be sure to focus on general information, not specifics.

The following is a bullet list of specific things you should look over and/or read when performing a pre-reading survey of a textbook chapter.

- **Chapter title and subtitles.** – Reading the chapter title and subtitles will provide you overall topic of the chapter, and will provide your reading direction and focus.
- **Focus questions at the beginning of each chapter.** – Many (not all) text books include focus questions at beginning of each chapter. Reviewing these questions before reading the text will help provide focus and indicate what to look for while reading the chapter.
- **Chapter introductions and first paragraphs.** – The first paragraph of a chapter usually provides an introduction to what the chapter will be about. Reading the first paragraph, or introduction, will tell what the material you're about to read is going to be about.
- **Boldface subheadings.** – Many sections will begin with boldface subheadings. Reviewing these subheadings before reading the chapter will provide you an idea of what major topics to focus on as you read each chapter section.
- **First sentence of each paragraph.** – The first sentence of a paragraph usually introduces the central thought of the paragraph. It tells you what the paragraph is about. However, in some texts, the first sentence is more of an attention getter. In this case, you'll need to read the first

and second sentence of each paragraph. This exercise alone will provide you a very good idea of what the entire chapter is about and the major themes to look for as you read.

- **Visual aids** – Look for any material that is presented in list form (ie., 1,2,3, lettered a,b,c, etc.). Bulleted list of information, pictures, diagrams, maps and pictures can all help you identify the most important points of the chapter.
- **Last paragraph or chapter summary.** – The last paragraph or summary provides a condensed explanation of what the chapter was about – including the most important take aways.
- **End-of-chapter material.** – Sometimes text books will provide study questions, or other study materials, at the end of each chapter. If present, review these materials to get a better idea of the important ideas and concepts to look for as you read.

### **Define your purpose**

Many texts contain information and details that is unrelated to the most important concepts and ideas. Identifying a purpose or objective when reading will keep you focused on what's important. Defining your purpose ahead of time will also help you classify information that is relevant to the main concepts, as well as that which is nonessential, so you can maximize the time spent studying what's most important.

### **Read the text**

Now that you've completed your pre-reading survey and identified a purpose, it's time to actually sit down and read the text. If you have a difficult time concentrating when you read, we recommend reading out loud. Many people comprehend material better if they read it out loud – especially if you're an auditory learner.

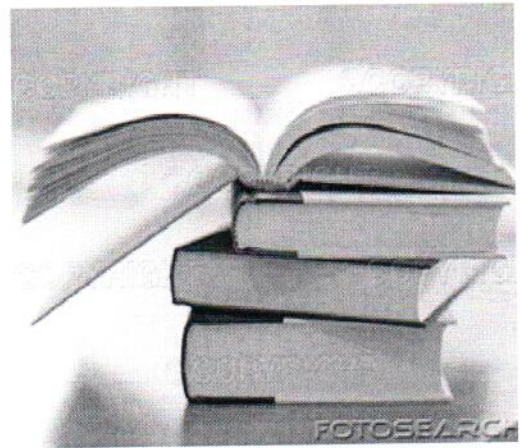
### **Take notes or highlight important concepts**

Writing something down is one of the most effective memory techniques. As you come across key concepts, facts and ideas, use a highlighter, write them down on a piece of paper, or make a note in the margin. This will help you remember what you've read and be able to quickly access important sections for future reference.

### **Post-reading review**

After reading a text, take time to identify what you've learned and important take aways. This will help you internalize what you've learned and help you retain it for future reference. Identifying what you've learned will also help you identify what you still do not fully comprehend, so you can spend more time reviewing unclear concepts.

# GETTING TO KNOW YOUR TEXTBOOK



## 1. Examine the title page:

- Who are the authors?
- What is their standing in their fields? (Perhaps you can ask your professor.)
- Do their training and background qualify them to write a book of this type?
- Who are the publishers?
- When was this textbook published? What does that tell you about the book?

## 2. Examine the preface or introduction:

- Why is a preface written?
- What does it tell you about the book?
- Do the authors introduce any unusual features of your book in the preface and prepare you to be on the lookout for them?

## 3. Examine the table of contents:

- What does the table of contents tell?
- How is this textbook organized? What main divisions does it have?
- Compare the table of contents with that of another book in the same field. Do the two books cover the same topics? Are these the topics you expected to find covered in this text?

## 4. Examine index, glossary, and other material at the back of the book:

- How does the index differ from the table of contents? How does it resemble the table of contents?
- What sort of topics should be looked up in the index instead of the table of contents?
- What is cross references?
- Is there a glossary in your textbook? Can you use diacritical markings successfully to pronounce a word?
- Is there an appendix in your book? Why isn't this information included in the body of the book? How would it have affected the organization?
- What is the literal meaning of "index" according to the dictionary?

## 5. Examine study questions, guides, and other helps:

- Does the text provide study aids to help in understanding the text?
- Are the study aids in the form of questions, exercises, or activities?
- If questions are used, do they simply require finding the answers or must you do some critical problem-type thinking to arrive at answers?
- Are there study aids both preceding and following a chapter? Which types of aids help you most?
- Does the text provide suggestions for other readings or materials designed to help you understand this chapter?

## 6. Examine chapter headings, sectional headings, and margin guides:

- Look at the chapter heading and then the section headings that follow. Write them down and see if this gives an overview of the chapter.
- How do headings help in skimming a chapter for specific information?
- Do you find different kinds of type in your chapter? Does this help you understand the organization of your textbook better? How?
- Does the text provide help in identifying material to be found within each paragraph? Is the topic sentence indicated?
- Does the book use summaries? How do these help? What is the difference between giving the gist of a chapter and summarizing its contents?

## 7. Examine maps, pictures, charts, diagrams, and tables:

- Which of these visual aids is used? Do you understand them?

# Using Your Textbook

When you purchase a new book, there are several things you should do automatically.

I. Look in the front:

A. **Read** and think about the table of contents.

1. This will show you the overall organization of the course and help identify what's important.
2. It will get you interested in the material.

B. Glance over any preface or foreword to see what the book is trying to do.

C. Consider the title. This is often a significant statement about the book's "slant." Do you know the author?

II. Look in the back:

A. Glance at the index. This is a listing of subject and pages upon which they can be found.

1. You can tell from the percentage of known and unknown words how difficult the text will be for you.
2. You can see with great precision what the course is concerned with.
3. You can look up specific items of interest.
4. As a review for tests, you can easily look up unknown items since the page number is given.

B. Is there a glossary listing unknown words and their definitions?

1. The main concern of many courses is to teach the vocabulary of the subject. This is a vital section, not something to be ignored.
2. Make a page tab out of scotch tape, and undertake to study and learn these words during the term. Use the tab for easy reference during time between classes-time which might otherwise be wasted.

C. Determine what other possibly useful materials are in the back-**before** you need them. You don't have to read them now; just know that they exist .

III. Determine how a typical chapter is constructed. (All of the other chapters will be put together the same way. If one chapter has a summary, they all will; if one chapter has questions, they all will.) Use this knowledge when you have a reading assignment. Structure your approach accordingly.

IV. Don't be afraid to write in your book-vocabulary words, condensations of ideas, personal reactions, etc. Interact with the book the way you'd interact with a person. Your texts provide a valuable resource during and after your academic career.

# 3 R's for Academic Survival

Here is a lean and wiry system containing all the essential techniques for mastering textbook assignments. This is an "exam passer".

.....

- 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, making notes in the margin, or making notes in your notebook.**
- R3      **RECITE.** Cover up your notes or printed page and **recite** aloud. Remember! If you can't say it now, you won't be able to say it tomorrow in class, nor write it in a week on an exam; so while you still have a chance, try and try again, until you can say it.

.....

## SQ3R Method for Thorough Study

- Step 1: SURVEY -      Look over material critically. Skim through the book and read topical and subtopical headings and sentences. Read the summaries at the end of chapters and books. Try to anticipate what the author is going to say.  
  
WRITE these notes on paper, in sequence; then look over the jottings to get an overall idea or picture. This will enable you to see where you are going.
- Step 2: QUESTIONS -      Instead of reading paragraph headings such as "Basic Concepts of Reading," change to read, "What are the Basic Concepts of Reading?" These questions will become "hooks" on which to hang the reading material.  
  
WRITE these questions out; look over the questions to see the emphasis and direction; then attempt to give plausible answers before further reading.
- Step 3: READ -      Read with smoothness and alertness to answer the questions. Use all the techniques and principles demonstrated in class.  
  
WRITE notes, in your own words, under each question. Take a minimum number of notes-use these notes as a skeleton.
- Step 4: RECALL\*\* -      Without looking at your book or notes, mentally visualize and sketch, in your own words, the high points of the material immediately upon completing the reading.
  - a. This forces you to check understanding.
  - b. This channels the material into a natural and usable form.
  - c. This points up what you do not understand.
  - d. This forces you to think.
- Step 5: REVIEW -      Look at your questions, answers, notes and book to see how well you did recall. Observe carefully the points stated incorrectly or omitted. Fix carefully in mind the logical sequence of the entire idea, concepts, or problem. Finish up with a mental picture of the WHOLE.