Source:
https://human.libretexts.org/Courses/City_College_of_San_Francisco/Writing_Reading_and_College_Success%3A_A_First-Year_Composition_Course_for_All_Learners_(Kashyap_and_Dyquisto)/03%3A_The_Reading-Writing_Connection/3.03%3A_Reading_Strategies_-_Previewing

Reading Strategies - Previewing

Pre-reading Strategies

The few minutes you spend preparing BEFORE reading any difficult material can motivate you to read it, as well as increase your ability to understand and remember what you read. Think about it like this: when you are driving to a new place, you would probably look at a map first (or at least turn on your GPS) so you don't waste time getting lost. Similarly, when you approach a new academic reading, it's best to use the 4P's (***p**urpose, **p**review, **p**rior knowledge, and **p**redict)* so you don't struggle as much to figure out what the authors want to say or how they plan to say it. Preparing to read can also help you estimate how long you'll take to read so you can plan your time more efficiently.

Reading Strategy: Previewing

What It Is

Previewing is a strategy that readers use to recall prior knowledge and set a purpose for reading. It calls for readers to skim a text before reading, looking for various features and information that will help as they return to read it in detail later.

Why Use It

According to research, previewing a text can improve comprehension (Graves, Cooke, & LaBerge, 1983, cited in Paris et al., 1991).

Previewing a text helps readers prepare for what they are about to read and set a purpose for reading.

The **genre** determines the reader's methods for previewing:

- Readers preview nonfiction to find out what they know about the subject and what they want to find out. It also helps them understand how an author has organized information.
- Readers preview biographies to determine something about the person in the biography, the time period, and some possible places and events in the life of the person.
- Readers preview fiction to determine characters, setting, and plot. They also preview to make predictions about story's problems and solutions.

When To Use It

Previewing is a strategy readers use before and during reading.

How To Use It

When readers preview a text before they read, they first ask themselves whether the text is fiction or nonfiction.

- If the text is fiction or biography, readers look at the title, chapter headings, introductory notes, and illustrations for a better understanding of the content and possible settings or events.
- If the text is nonfiction, readers look at text features and illustrations (and their captions) to determine subject matter and to recall prior knowledge, to decide what they know about the subject. Previewing also helps readers figure out what they don't know and what they want to find out.

How to Preview

Previewing a text is similar to watching a movie preview.

Think of previewing a text as similar to watching a movie trailer. A successful preview for either a movie or a reading experience will capture what the overall work is going to be about, generally what expectations the audience can have of the experience to come, how the piece is structured, and what kinds of patterns will emerge.

Previewing engages your prior experience and asks you to think about what you already know about this subject matter, or this author, or this publication. Then anticipate what new information might be ahead of you when you return to read this text more closely.

Specific Previewing Strategies

KWL+

KWL+ is a simple strategy that is both a reading-writing strategy, as well as an overall structure for research papers. **K** stands for "What I **K**now". **W** stands for "What I **W**ant to Know." **L** stands for "What I **L**earned." **+** stands for "What I Still (**+**) Want to Know.

The 4 "P"s: Purpose, Preview, Prior Knowledge, Predict

1. *Purpose:* Determining your reading goals can help motivate you to read. It will also determine how carefully you need to read and what reading strategies you can use.

- Are you looking for general main ideas or specific details, or both?
- Are you going to discuss what you read in class, take a test, use what you read in an essay? Or are you just reading for pleasure?
- How does this reading task tie into the unit or the whole course?

2. *Preview:* Spend a few minutes looking at visual clues to the author's central idea, supporting points, and organization of ideas. Depending on the type of reading, look at some, or all, of the following elements:

- Title
- Introductory information about the author and/or selection
- First and last paragraphs
- First sentence of body paragraphs
- Headings and subheadings
- *Italics*, **bold print**, numbers, symbols
- Comprehension questions or, other after-reading assignment

3. Prior Knowledge: What do you already know about this topic? Using your own background knowledge and experiences can help stimulate your interest and increase your comprehension.

4. Predict: After previewing a text, a reader can begin to make guesses about what the writer wants to say. These *predictions* are important in motivating you and keep you focused while reading.

Use the SQ3R Strategy

One strategy you can use to become a more active, engaged reader is the SQ3R strategy, a step-by-step process to follow before, during, and after reading. You may already be using some variation of it. In essence, the process works like this:

1. **Survey** the text in advance.

2. Form **questions** before you start reading.

3. **Read** the text.

4. **Recite** and/or **record** important points during and after reading.

5. **Review** and **reflect** on the text after you read.

Before reading, survey -- or preview -- the text. As noted earlier, reading introductory paragraphs and headings can help you figure out the text's main point and identify what important topics will be covered. However, surveying does not stop there. Look over sidebars, photographs, and any other text or graphic features that catch your eye. Skim a few paragraphs. Preview any boldfaced or italicized vocabulary terms. This will help you form a first impression of the material.

Next, start brainstorming questions about the text. What do you expect to learn from the reading? You may find that some questions come to mind immediately based on your initial survey or based on previous readings and class discussions. If not, try using headings and subheadings in the text to formulate questions. For instance, if one heading in your textbook reads "Medicare and Medicaid," you might ask yourself:

- When was Medicare and Medicaid legislation enacted? Why?
- What are the major differences between these two programs?

Although some of your questions may be simple factual questions, try to come up with a few that are ore open-ended. Asking in-depth questions will help you stay more engaged as you read.

The next step is simple: read. As you read, notice whether your first impressions of the text were correct. Are the author's main points and overall approach about the same as what you predicted--or does the text contain a few surprises? Also, look for answers to your earlier questions and begin forming new questions. Continue to revise your impressions and questions as you read.

While you are reading, pause occasionally to record/recite important points. It is best to do this at the end of each section or where there is an obvious shift in the writer's train of thought. Put the book aside for a moment and recite aloud the main points of the section or any important answers you found there. You might also record ideas by jotting down a few brief notes in addition to, or instead of, reciting aloud. Either way, the physical act of articulating information makes you more likely to remember it.

After you have completed the reading, take some time to review the material more thoroughly. If the textbook includes review questions or your instructor has provided a study guide, use these tools to guide your review. You will want to record information in a more detailed format than you did during reading (which would be an outline or a list).

As you review the material, reflect on what you learned. Did anything surprise you, upset you, or make you think? Did you find yourself strongly agree or disagreeing with any points in the text? What topics would you like to explore further? Jot down your reflections in your notes.

Use Other Active Reading Strategies

The SQ3R process encompasses a number of valuable active reading strategies: previewing a text, making predictions, asking and answering questions, and summarizing. You can use the following additional strategies to further deepen your understanding of what you read.

- **Connect what you read to what you already know.** Look for ways the reading supports, extends, or challenges concepts you have learned elsewhere.
- **Relate the reading to your own life.** What statements, people, or situations relate to your personal experiences?
- **Visualize.** For both fiction and nonfiction texts, try to picture what is described. Visualizing is especially helpful when you are reading a narrative text, such as a novel or a historical account, or when you read expository texts that describes a process, such as how to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
- **Pay attention to graphics a well as text**. Photographs, diagrams, flow charts, tables, and other graphics can help make abstract ideas more concrete and understandable.
- **Understand the text in context.** Understanding context means thinking about who wrote the text, when and where it was written, the author's purpose in writing it, and what assumptions or agendas influenced the author's ideas. For instance, two writers address the subject of health care reform, but if one article is an opinion piece and one is a news story, the rhetorical context is different.
- **Plan to talk or write about what you read.** Jot down a few questions or comments in your notebook so you can bring them up in class. (This also gives you a source of topic ideas for papers and presentations later in the semester.) Discuss the reading on a class discussion board or blog about it.

Additional Strategies

Following are some strategies you can use to enhance your reading even further:

- **Pace yourself.** Figure out how much time you have to complete the assignment. Divide the assignment into smaller blocks rather than trying to read the entire assignment in one sitting. If you have a week to do the assignment, for example, divide the work into five daily blocks, not seven; that way you won't be behind if something comes up to prevent you from doing your work on a given day. If everything works out on schedule, you'll end up with an extra day for review.

- **Schedule your reading.** Set aside blocks of time, preferably at the time of the day when you are most alert, to do your reading assignments. Don't just leave them for the end of the day after completing written and other assignments.

- **Get yourself in the right space.** Choose to read in a quiet, well-lit space. Your chair should be comfortable but provide good support. Libraries were designed for reading—they should be your first option! Don't use your bed for reading textbooks; since the time you were read bedtime stories, you have probably associated reading in bed with preparation for sleeping. The combination of the cozy bed, comforting memories, and dry text is sure to invite some shut-eye!

- **Avoid distractions.** Active reading takes place in your short-term memory. Every time you move from task to task, you have to "reboot" your short-term memory and you lose the continuity of active reading. Multitasking—listening to music or texting on your cell phone while you read—will cause you to lose your place and force you to start over again. Every time you lose focus, you cut your effectiveness and increase the amount of time you need to complete the assignment.

- **Avoid reading fatigue.** Work for about fifty minutes, and then give yourself a break for five to ten minutes. Put down the book, walk around, get a snack, stretch, or do some deep knee bends. Short physical activity will do wonders to help you feel refreshed.

- **Read your most difficult assignments early** in your reading time, when you are freshest.

- **Make your reading interesting.** Try connecting the material you are reading with your class lectures or with other chapters. Ask yourself where you disagree with the author. Approach finding answers to your questions like an investigative reporter. Carry on a mental conversation with the author.

- **Highlight** your reading material. Most readers tend to highlight too much, hiding key ideas in a sea of yellow lines, making it difficult to pick out the main points when it is time to review. When it comes to highlighting, less is more. Think critically before you highlight. Your choices will have a big impact on what you study and learn for the course. Make it your objective to highlight no more than 15-25% of what you read. Use highlighting after you have read a section to note the most important points, key terms, and concepts. Y**ou can't know what the most important thing is unless you've read the whole section, so don't highlight as you read.**

- **Annotate** your reading material. Marking up your book may go against what you were told in high school when the school owned the books and expected to use them year after year. In college, *you* bought the book. Make it truly yours. Although some students may tell you that you can get more cash by selling a used book that is not marked up, this should *not* be a concern at this time—that's not nearly as important as understanding the reading and doing well in the class!

The purpose of marking your textbook is to make it your personal studying assistant with the key ideas called out in the text. Use your pencil also to make annotations in the margin. Use a symbol like an exclamation mark (*!*) or an asterisk (***) to mark an idea that is particularly important. Use a question mark (*?*) to indicate something you don't understand or are unclear about. Box new words, then write a short definition in the margin. Use "TQ" (for "test question") or some other shorthand or symbol to signal key things that may appear in test or quiz questions. Write personal notes on items where you disagree with the author. Don't feel you have to use the symbols listed here; create your own if you want, but be consistent. Your notes won't help you if the first question you later have is "I wonder what I meant by that?"

- **Get to Know the Conventions.** Academic texts, like scientific studies and journal articles, may have sections that are new to you. If you're not sure what an "abstract" is, research it online or ask your instructor. Understanding the meaning and purpose of such conventions is not only helpful for reading comprehension but for writing, too.

- **Look up and Keep Track of Unfamiliar Terms and Phrases.** Have a good college dictionary such as Merriam-Webster handy (or find it online) when you read complex academic texts, so you can look up the meaning of unfamiliar words and terms. Many textbooks also contain glossaries or "key terms" sections at the ends of

chapters or the end of the book. Many books available on an e-reader have definitions already embedded if you highlight the unknown word. If you can't find the words you're looking for in a standard dictionary, you may need one specially written for a particular discipline. For example, a medical dictionary would be a good resource for a course in anatomy and physiology. If you circle or underline terms and phrases that appear repeatedly, you'll have a visual reminder to review and learn them. Repetition helps to lock in these new words and to get their meaning into long-term memory, so the more you review them, the more you'll understand and feel comfortable using them.

- **Make Flashcards.** If you are studying certain words for a test, or you know that certain phrases will be used frequently in a course or field, try making flashcards for review. For each key term, write the word on one side of an index card and the definition on the other. Drill yourself, and then ask your friends to help quiz you. Developing a strong vocabulary is similar to most hobbies and activities. Even experts in a field continue to encounter and adopt new words.