# Read strategies manus

# Pre-reading

Our main tip on how to improve your study preparation time is to use pre-reading techniques. Before you start reading a text, it is essential that you complete a thorough pre-reading.

You pre-read in order to get an overall view: What is the topic of the text? How is it constructed? How difficult is it to read? And last, but not least, what will you use it for? What is YOUR intention with reading the text? Maybe your teacher has emphasized topics or concepts you need to pay special attention to.

Never start reading a text from page 1 and onwards, before you’ve done a pre-reading. If you start reading a text without a clearly stated purpose, you can easily end up reading without direction and lose track of the intention.

When you do a pre-reading, you check out the frontpage, the back page, table of contents, illustrations, headlines, graphics, illustrations, etc. This will give you a general overview and activate your prior subject knowledge and most likely help you to better comprehend and remember the text.

# Post-reading

Applying good pre-reading strategies and choosing the right reading methods is important, especially when you read more advanced texts. But using post-reading strategies is no bad idea either!

When you've read your text, ask yourself if you learnt what you'd expected.

A couple of reflective minutes is well spent. Ask yourself if you've understood the general idea and central concepts or if anything needs further attention. Maybe you need to re-read the text or ask your teacher to explain it.

One strategy for post-reading is to sum up the central points - take notes while reading, write a resumé, draw a mind map or explain what you've read for a fellow student or family member. It doesn't need to take long, just a couple of minutes - research has shown that even a short recap improves both learning outcome and retention.

You will notice when you recap the text if your understanding of the text is insufficient. Note down what you don't understand and seek answers from your teacher, study group or someone else.

The point is that you actively seek answers to subject matters you do not understand. Avoid the action of just letting it pass.

Good study skills are not just about reading, but also about engaging with knowledge and putting it into context. The better you understand and process subject matter, the more you will understand – both in class and when you read texts.

# Reading

In a perfect world, after you’ve done a pre-reading, you will know your purpose with the text and decide on the most appropriate reading technique. Should you read it normally, thoroughly or perhaps just skim it?

Skimming is a reading strategy that can come in handy when you study. Even though many see it as cheating it is quite a handy strategy – especially if you feel overwhelmed by the number of texts you need to read. Skimming is the obvious choice for gaining a broad overview on large topics or if you are looking for a specific piece of information.

To skim a text, simply let your eyes move through the lines of text without reading every word. Focus instead on the more essential parts such as headlines, sub-headlines, captions, illustrations, graphs, etc or a specific keyword if you seek specific information.

A hint is to focus on the introduction and conclusion of the chapter. This will often give you a general idea of the text’s essence and most important points.

Finally, it’s worth mentioning that skimming also can come in handy in emergency situations when you don’t have time to prepare thoroughly for class. A quick skimming of even difficult texts can often provide you with a basic understanding, so you won’t be completely lost when your teacher goes through the subject matter.

# About reading

Most students will notice the big change from being a pupil at a secondary school to student at a higher education institution.

One important difference is, that you are now more responsible for your own learning outcomes. The teachers’ role at a higher education institution is e.g. more professional than pedagogical. Which means that your teacher won’t guide you through the curriculum and make sure everyone is following along, so you must pay special attention.

Furthermore, it is undeniably time consuming to study at a higher education. The amount of reading material can at times seem daunting and scary – especially if you don’t feel you’re the fastest reader.

Therefore, it is important to learn how to study smarter, because there is a lot to gain from choosing the right approach to and techniques for your studies. And this is not just about scheduling your reading and finding a good physical study environment. It is also about actively prioritizing and evaluating your reading. If you can’t decipher how to read a curriculum book, you can easily be overwhelmed by the volume of reading material. This, in turn, can make you feel like an insufficient student, which is a pity because learning how to optimize your reading isn’t hard.

We will here present you with techniques and strategies to help you get the most out of your reading. Basically, you must approach your reading process in three stages: before, during and after.

# Tempo

Many environmental, physical and mental factors can affect the speed of your reading. In this video, you will be introduced to two simple techniques for improving it. But be aware that many other factors such as lightning, sound, vocabular and mental awareness also has an impact on your reading speed, as well as an internal read-along voice can slow down reading drastically.

In order to exercise speed reading you should work with fixations and forward reading.

When you read, your eyes don’t move in one fluid motion. They jump through the text and read the words in fixations. When we learn how to read, we start letter by letter and move on to word by word. But by widening your gaze and taking in more words at the same time, it is possible to read with fewer fixations per line. Thus, you improve your reading speed by generally increasing the speed and forcing yourself to frequent line shifts.

Many have the habit of jumping back in the text while reading – so called regression. The trick is to trust your brain and assure yourself that you have caught the key points. You can use a couple of simple methods to train forward reading. For example, you can use a piece of paper and let it slide down the page in a proper tempo. This way you restrain the eyes from jumping back in the text. Another method involves a pen which defines the reading speed. Your eyes will naturally follow the motion of the pen. The intent is to let the eye follow the pen, not the other way around.

Consider your reading tempo, especially if you feel like a slow reader. If you read too slow it can influence your comprehension as you might lose overview. On the other hand: if you read too fast you might not understand what you’ve read.

You can measure your reading tempo with this simple formulation: *(words pr page \* pages read) / minutes*

The average reader reads somewhere between 2-400 words pr. minute if the text is not too difficult (e.g. a newspaper article). The absolute max reading speed with comprehension is about 800 words/min for the skilled reader with a lot of pre-knowledge.

Speed reading is not a quick fix. To improve your reading tempo, everyday training is important.

Remember that not all texts are fit for speed reading and that it can help to exercise speed reading in intervals with easy-to-read texts.