

READING EFFECTIVELY

You are assigned a lot of meaningful materials to read. Here are some tips on how to manage the load strategically:

- Plan your reading. Engage time management practices to dedicate regular time to doing your course readings, considering the best times and places to do them.
- Use active reading techniques (see below) so you stay attentive and can learn and understand as you go. Consider reading as a form of conversation.

It's important to use active or critical reading techniques when you read. Imagine that you are engaging authors in a dialogue by examining and assessing their arguments. This will help you stay alert, build your understanding of the content as you go and retain the information longer.

A popular method includes surveying the reading before diving in, then pursuing the reading with a question in mind. This is followed by checking that you are remembering and understanding the work. This method is often called "SQ4R." Consider the Rs a range of options for growing familiar with the material in an active and meaningful way. At first, this method may seem more time-consuming than simply reading the text, but you will be reading, taking notes and studying in a single process, ultimately saving time.

Survey

- Build a roadmap of the information: what is the overarching theme?
- Read the title and sub-titles of the chapter or reading.
- Read the summary, synopsis or abstract, if there is one. If not, read the introduction and the conclusion instead.
- Look at the illustrations, diagrams, graphs, key words, questions for consideration and problem sets. Use these hints to get an overview of the text.

Question

- While **Surveying**, ask questions as you go to help with concentration and understanding. For example:
 - What do you already know about this?
 - How does this relate to the rest of the course material?
 - What does the author want you to believe?
 - What evidence or reasoning do they provide to support their argument?
 - What are some possible limitations of the author's argument?
 - What are potential obvious biases that the author is exhibiting? Think about socio-cultural considerations including gender, ethnicity and class. Whose voice/perspective/worldview is dominant in this text? Whose is left out?
 - What questions has the author left unaddressed?
 - What parts of the author's argument do you agree with?
 - What are the applications of this knowledge?
 - Why does this matter? To you? To your field? To society at large?
- In some texts, you could also turn sub-headings into questions.
 - For example, in a first year Psychology text, a sub-heading called "The benefits of talking about trauma" can be turned into the question, "what are the benefits of talking about trauma?"

Read & Respond

- Read the material section by section, actively looking for the answers to your questions and annotating the text as you go.
- Once you've found your answer, you may want to highlight or underline it in your text.
- You can note key words, jotting down further questions that arise during the reading or any thoughts or observations you have as you read. These are called response notes.
- To deepen your understanding and use critical thinking methods, think about what you are learning and connect the information to previous knowledge in the course or in other courses.
- When you finish a section, move to the **Recall** stage.

Recall

- Check that you can recall what you read as you go along. This is a way to ensure that you understand the material, can respond to it and remember it. This also leverages the value of repetition for memory.
- You can do this by covering up a section and seeing what you can remember by saying it aloud.
- You may find that other methods like writing brief summary notes help you with this recall. Synthesizing and summarizing the material in your own words help you be sure that you understand the material and have given it deep thought.
- When you are finished this, repeat the **Read & Respond** part of the method with the next section.

Review

- When you have finished, go back over the material you highlighted or took note of, any key words you identified and your thoughts, questions or other notes.
- Anticipate how you might need to use this knowledge in the future. Will you be tested on it? Will you have to write an essay about it? Prepare a summary or digest that will help you later.
- Review these summaries again as the course progresses, in order to deepen your understanding and enhance your ability to remember the material.

Want to know more?

The Centre for Learning Strategy Support has resources, workshops, events and appointments to support you.

→ look us up online at learningstrategy.utoronto.ca

→ email us at clss@utoronto.ca

→ or give us a call at **416.978.7970**