



# Reading a Textbook



## Improve Your Reading

- Find a place where you can read with few distractions. Do what you can to avoid interruptions so you can concentrate.
- Expect primary sources to be harder to read than secondary sources. You will need to make your own interpretations and understand the context in which the primary source was written.
- Plan a reading strategy for each class that fits the material's complexity, your reading capacity, and your available time. Use textbook features such as in-chapter summaries to plan your approach.
- Take a positive attitude toward your reading. Others have been successful and you will be too.
- Reward on-task reading behavior. Pace yourself to make your reading time efficient.
- Consult other sources if your assignments or readings are hard to understand. Find similar textbooks or other library materials that can help.

## Marking the Text and Taking Notes from Text

- Be selective when you highlight text. If you highlight too much, you may need to reread most of the text later.
- Write your notes in your own words. This practice will show you what you understand and lay a good foundation for avoiding plagiarism when you write.
- Select a note-taking format that makes it easy to review and succeed. Get help with learning how to take more effective notes if your system does not work.

## Reading Different Disciplines

- **Literature** Any author who intends to share experiences through poetry, novels, plays or short stories creates a narrative that invites you into the action. Think about the motivation of the characters. Try to use as many senses as the author used — tasting, smelling, hearing — as you recreate the author's world in your imagination.
- **History** Reading history is a great opportunity to use your imagination. Think about whether you would react the same way to the circumstances of the historic figures you are reading about. Make predictions about the consequences that must have followed for key events.
- **Science and Math** These subjects use mathematical notation, graphs, tables and other visual information to make important and complex ideas easier to understand. Spend time studying charts and graphs so you understand the concepts. Make notes about the concepts and formulas or maintain a running glossary of terms to help keep things straight in your own mind. Strive to develop the practice of coming up with examples to help you when reading texts in the sciences.

## Peer Reading Groups

- Identify the hardest concepts you have encountered.
- Talk about the problems or ideas you especially like or dislike.
- Discuss the parts of readings that interest you most.
- Help group members share and clarify their understanding of the information.
- Discuss strategies for remembering course material.
- Generate questions to prepare for tests.





# PQ4R



**PQ4R is a method of reading that individuals can use to help them better comprehend written material. PQ4R is a strategy that helps individuals focus on mentally organizing information and making it meaningful. The steps for PQ4R are as follows:**

- **P**review: Preview the material to get an idea of the general organization, major topics and subtopics. Look at headings and pictures to try to identify what you will be reading about.
- **Q**uestion: Ask questions about the material as you read it. Use headings to come up with questions (who, what, why, where).
- **R**ead: Read the material and try to answer your questions while reading.
- **R**eflect: Think about the material that you just read and try to make it meaningful by relating it to things that you already know about, relating the subtopics to primary topics, trying to resolve contradictions, and trying to use the material to solve simulated problems.
- **R**ecite: Practice remembering the information by stating points aloud and asking and answering questions. Use headings, highlighted words and notes on major ideas.
- **R**evise: Actively review the material, focusing on asking yourself questions and rereading the material only when you are not sure of the answers.

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## Additional practices that work for many students:

- Using highlighters to mark important passages as you read
- Writing outlines of all the important information in each chapter
- Reading in 30 minute blocks, followed by a short break
- Reciting or reviewing material while talking out loud or moving your lips
- Using study time to self-test rather than rereading the entire text
- Joining a study group to discuss the reading.
- Getting regular exercise, which makes sitting for long periods easier

## Common Reading Pitfalls:

- Falling behind the syllabus in your reading
- Reading while listening to music with lyrics
- Reading for hours at a time without a break
- Highlighting too much material
- Not reading the material
- Overlooking review questions provided in the text
- Reading while your mind wanders

