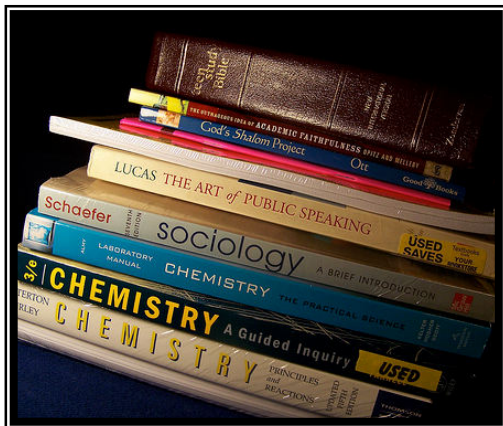


Reading Strategies Guidebook



MIAMI UNIVERSITY

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LEARNING CENTER

“There is no friend as loyal as a book.”

Ernest Hemingway

“To learn to read is to light a fire; every syllable that is spelled out is a spark.”

Victor Hugo

“Before anything else, preparation is the secret of success.”

Alexander Graham Bell

“There are no secrets to success. It is a result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure.”

Colin Powell

“No matter how busy you may think you are, you must find time for reading, or surrender yourself to self-chosen ignorance.”

Confucius

“What a miracle it is that out of these small, flat, rigid squares of paper unfolds world after world after world, worlds that sing to you, comfort and quiet or excite you. Books help us understand who we are and how we are to behave. They show us what community and friendship mean; they show us how to live and die.”

Anne Lamott

Introduction to Reading Strategies



Reading is one of the most basic ways of acquiring information in college. Textbooks, research articles, and literature provide a critical, often different perspective on the material you are learning. It requires a lot of attention to read and maintaining this attention is often difficult. In a world where quick summaries of texts are available online, many of us find ourselves bored and distracted when reading a long textbook chapter or research article.

Given this, some college students may think that reading isn't critical to their success – “If I'm not remembering the things I'm reading, why bother?” Without having a plan, reading can sometimes seem like another box to check off your to-do list. If you come out of the task with little new understanding of the material it can feel like a waste of time.

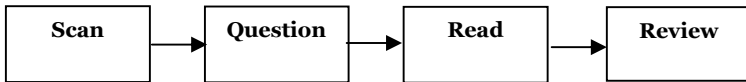
But it doesn't have to be. Intentional reading strategies can help improve your recall and make the time you spend on reading more worthwhile. Reading doesn't need to be done from start to finish. It is best to go in with a plan to gain the information you need from reading, rather than hoping that you are able to gather information by jumping in head-first.

This guidebook is designed to help you understand how to go into your textbook and research articles with intention. You will acquire strategies for improving your recall and retention of information in textbooks, research articles, and literary works.

Reading Your Textbook: A Step-by-Step Process

There are a number of recommended strategies for enhancing your reading comprehension in college. All of them come down to a simple truth; in order to understand your textbooks, you first have to understand what it is you hope to gain from reading them. Without this basic understanding, it is hard to truly grasp the material. You must read *intentionally* with a clear goal in mind.

In this guidebook we will go over a step-by-step process of planning, reading, and reviewing your textbook readings. This is a simplified explanation of the SQ3R method of active reading, which you can read about in more depth in the resources listed at the end of this guidebook.



Scan

Before you even open your textbook, you should have a good understanding of the subject from your course title and expectations of your instructor. Once you're ready to begin the task of gaining information from your textbooks, it is good to have a general understanding of what you'll need to know.

When scanning your textbooks, your primary goal is to understand what you **need to know** about the chapter you're reading. Focus on headings, bolded terms, tables or graphs, and any lists of information in the text. The goal is to understand what the chapter is trying to tell you without necessarily going into the details.

Things to look for:

- Chapter Headings
- ~~Graphs~~
- Lists of Information

Question

Either while you are scanning or after you have finished scanning your text, you should write down questions for yourself. For instance, if a section heading is “Microbiology and Brain Function,” a question you could ask yourself is “What is the relationship between microbiology and brain function?” After completing the reading process, you will attempt to answer the questions you’ve made for yourself.

Read

Now that you’ve scanned the text and asked yourself the questions you need answered, your next step is to read the text in more depth. Your goal is to read for clarity – you should focus on the sections that your questions about the text center around. As you read, you should also annotate the textbook, which involves summarizing key points of the text in the margins. Further description of annotation is given on the next page.



Review

Now that you’ve read the text, your next goal is to answer the questions you’ve asked yourself, coming full circle from the beginning of the process. If you can answer your questions, you’ve successfully mastered the material – if not, then you may need to go to those sections where you’re having problems. Review is an ongoing process and you will want to briefly review chapters frequently, at least weekly, throughout the semester to keep older material fresh in your mind. When test time comes around, you’ll be able to answer those questions just as easily!

Annotation

Annotation is a form of note-taking while reading that can boost your retention and recall of information. Annotation involves summing up key information in your textbook margins in your own words. Doing so forces you to actively read the text for meaning. Annotation can be done in addition to highlighting and underlining your text, but just highlighting or underlining is not sufficient to gain full understanding while reading. An example of annotated notes—and more information on annotation itself—is shown below.

Margin	Text
Annotation is more active than highlighting and underlining	<p>Annotation is the practice of making notes alongside the margin as you read your textbook. Students often find themselves passively underlining or highlighting their textbooks as the only means they use to help them identify the key points of their text. Annotation attempts to take the relatively passive process of only underlining and highlighting and turn it into an active learning process – one that helps you learn more effectively and stay more active during your reading.</p>
Write in your books!	<p>Annotation requires you to use the margins of your textbooks as well as marking the text. Don't be afraid to use the pages you've paid for to the fullest – if you've bought your books from the Miami Bookstore, annotations will not reduce the resell price later on. As you are reading through the text according to your plan, you will summarize the key points of the text.</p>
Close reading of the text with periodic pauses	<p>Unlike with only underlining and highlighting, you should read the text more closely – including all of the text that explains key terms – before making your annotations. This will mean that you stop reading periodically to make your annotations, after reaching key points in the text, rather than constantly scanning for key phrases to underline or highlight.</p>
Author claims annotation better than underlining / highlighting alone	<p><i>Guidebook Excerpt: Annotation</i> 1</p>

Breaking Down the Research Article

Research articles can be an intimidating form of text for anyone to decipher. Research articles are full of jargon and technical information that can make it very difficult for anyone not fully immersed in a field to understand. However, research articles are important to read and comprehend. Many of your classes will require that you be able to delve into research first-hand and gain insights about the fields you are studying.

How can you best understand the complex jargon and terminology in a research article? First, you need to know what you're looking for in an article, just like you need to know what you're looking for in a textbook.

It is easy to just read blindly through each section of a research article without understanding what it is you're reading. This section of Critical Reading Strategies will help you understand the components of research articles, why each section is important, and where you should go in an article if you are looking for specific information.

In the following pages descriptions of the components of a typical research article can be found. They are, in order:

- Abstract
- Introduction
- Methodology
- Results
- Discussion
- Conclusion
- References



Abstract

The abstract is a short summary of the information that the article will cover. When doing research, abstracts can help you understand if a particular article will be useful to your research project. Students make two common mistakes in regards to abstracts: *not* reading them, or *only* reading them. Not reading the abstract can make searching for appropriate research articles much more difficult. On the same note, reading *only* the abstract will leave you with only a limited understanding of the research.

Introduction

The introduction of an article is just that – an introduction to the topic of study. The introduction is the best place to look to get background knowledge about a subject – including citations to other authors who may offer key insights into the topic you are researching.

Key components of the introduction include:

- A historical background of the subject
- A detailed literature review of related research
- A simple introduction to the article's purpose
- A hypothesis, if appropriate

Methodology

The Methodology will get into the details of the research project. Methodologies can be highly technical and for students unfamiliar with scientific terminology, it can be difficult to break down what is going on – don't be afraid to look up terms you are unfamiliar with.

Methodologies often include the following key data:

- Research methods employed by the authors
- The demographics of and process used to select participants or objects of study
- Any measurement systems being used in the study
- How the authors of the study analyzed the data

Results

Just as the name implies, the results section details the data the authors found in the study. As with the methodology section, the results section can be quite difficult for people outside of the field of the article to understand. It is important to gain a good understanding of the results. It is best to look over all of the forms of data presented.

Results are often presented to readers in a number of forms, including the following:

- Detailed, in-text descriptions of results
- Tables of results that allow side-by-side comparison of different forms of data
- Graphs and charts that allow for visual comparison of different forms of data

Discussion

The discussion section is one of the more important sections of the paper, as it is where the authors interpret the data they have obtained from the results section. It is important that you have an understanding of the results before reading the discussion, as the discussion relies upon the authors' interpretation of the results.

Discussion sections often include:

- Interpretations of the data
- Explanations of outlying or interesting data points
- Potential flaws in the study design

Conclusion

While the discussion section of the paper allows authors to interpret their own results, the conclusion section of the paper allows the authors to place their results in a larger context. In this section, authors focus on how the research matters to their field – what are the implications of the information?

Authors often include the following in their conclusions:

- Interpretation of their research results in a larger scientific context
- Any potential shortcomings of the study, in either method or population selection
- Suggestions for future research in the field

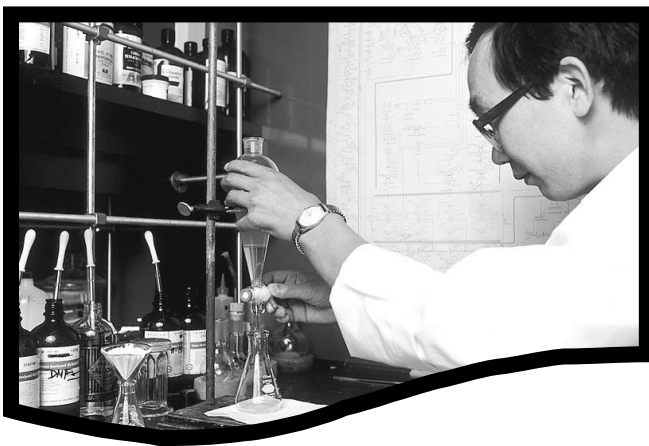
References

In the final section of the paper, authors create a listing of all sources they cited in their research. It is easy to skip over this section – it is often seen as merely ensuring that others' work receives its due credit. That said, if you're working on a research paper the references section can be a huge help to you. Authors' studies are usually linked to studies of similar phenomenon and the references section can be a good place to look for studies that are related to the one you just read.

Using Articles in Studying

Professors use research articles as a means of teaching students about cutting-edge and historical research in the field. Hopefully, now that you understand each part of the research paper, you can see what sort of information you should be gaining from each article you read. Questions that you should ask yourself after reading a research article are the following:

- What are the historical foundations and research behind the research described in the article?
- What did the study find?
- Was the author's hypothesis supported?
- Were there any unexpected findings?
- What are potential shortcomings of this research?
- What types of research can future researchers in this area do to expand our knowledge?



Literary Texts

While the strategies outlined in the “Reading Your Textbook” section apply to most types of text, fictional texts may require a different approach. You may be asked in some courses to read and analyze literature. Scanning for headings and bolded text is futile in this context as literature is not usually designed to visually outline important information for readers.

Often, the best way to approach a literature assignment is as a conversation with the author, using annotation to describe your reactions to the events taking place. Your goal is to understand what the author is trying to convey. It can be useful to highlight or underline particularly emotional or shocking portions of the text.

The following annotation example, using text from “Romeo and Juliet”, may be helpful to you as a guide in analyzing literature:

Margin	Text
Why is Romeo so conflicted?	<p>ROMEO</p> <p>Alas, that love, whose view is muffled still, Should, without eyes, see pathways to his will What shall we do? O me Yet tell me not, for I have heard it all. How much to do with hate, but more with love. <u>Why then, O brawling love</u> O any thing, of nothing first create Oshrews lightness Mis-shapen chaos of well-seeming forms Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health Still-waking sleep, that is not what it is This love feel I, that feel no love in this. <u>Dost thou not laugh?</u></p>
Romeo seems to think that Benvolio is going to mock him.	<p>BENVOLIO</p> <p><u>No, coz, I rather weep.</u></p>
Is Benvolio annoyed or sad for Romeo?	<p>ROMEO</p> <p>Good heart, at what?</p> <p>BENVOLIO</p> <p>At thy good heart</p>

Web Resources

There are many resources available to help you develop better reading skills. If you are interested in learning more about reading strategies please explore the following resources:

Dartmouth University's Academic Skills Center Reading Strategies

<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~acskills/success/reading.html>

Includes a list of common reading myths, and has links to several documents that detail further active reading strategies.

Muskingum College's Learning Strategies Database Reading Strategies

<http://www.muskingum.edu/~cal/database/general/reading.html>

Includes a list of common reading strategies used by effective and ineffective readers and ways you can improve your reading by changing the way you approach your assignments.

University of Wyoming Strategies for Engaged Reading

<http://www.uwyo.edu/english/undergraduate-students/english1010/1010-osh-readingstrat.html>

Includes strategies for before, during, and after reading to further increase comprehension.

King's College Reading a Research Article

<http://www.lib.jmu.edu/ilworkshop08/materials/studyguide3.pdf>

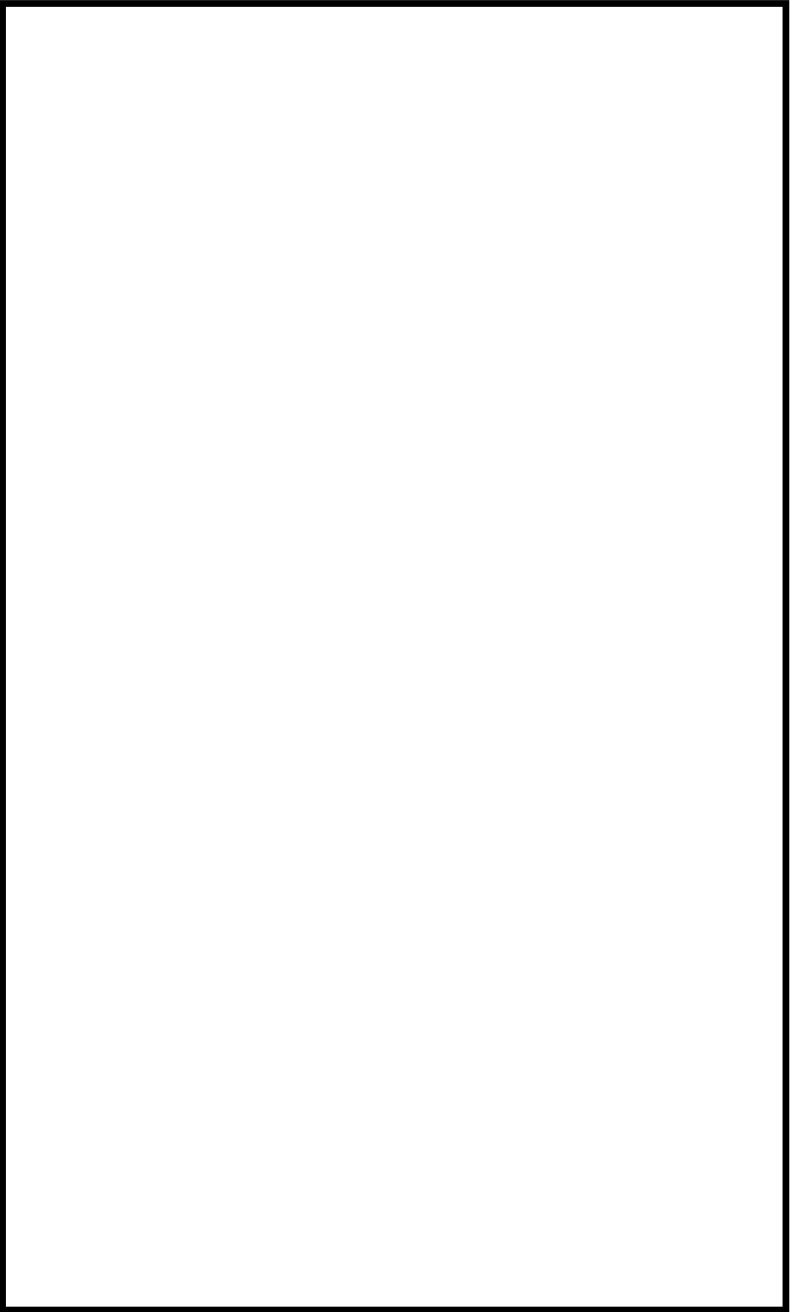
Provides additional information on how to effectively read a research article, including additional questions you should seek to answer through your reading.

WritingforCollege.org How to Read Literature

<http://www.tc.umn.edu/~jewel001/CollegeWriting/WRITELIT/ReadLit.htm>

Includes additional helpful information for reading and analyzing literature at the college level.

Notes

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If you are interested in working with a Learning Specialist to improve your note taking, test-taking, or general study strategies, please contact:

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