

Reading Effectively

The aim of course reading is to extend and integrate new learning into your current knowledge.

- Reading is most effective when you **consciously consider the material** and **stay engaged** with the content as you read.
- **Use a reading technique** to ensure your reading translates into learning and to limit time spent re-reading course material.



- **Plan to cover all reading** for all papers. You may need to improve your [time management](#) if you are not getting through all your reading.
- **Read in short bursts** of 30-40 minutes, with a 5 - 10 minute break. This will keep your mind fresh and focused.
- **Choose a distraction free environment** where you can sit comfortably and take notes as you read, and aim to limit interruptions.
- **Make notes** of the content in your own words. Also, journaling your thinking helps you learn and make sense of the material.

Four techniques for effective reading

1. Layering and Outlining

<p>a) Look over the entire section to be read to identify the headings and sub headings. Alternatively, identify the topic of each paragraph (often found in the first sentence of a paragraph) and note the key word or idea.</p> <p>b) Show the structure of the reading by creating a mind map of the headings and subheadings (or keywords if the passage does not have headings), or an outline where headings or main ideas are aligned to the left margin and sub headings are indented.</p>	<p>c) Review the mindmap or outline in order to gain an overall understanding of the topic and reflect on what you already know about the topic.</p> <p>d) Go back and read the details, adding notes to your outline and thinking about how the details fit with the overall structure.</p> <p>e) Reflect on the topic and see if you can relate the topic to a real-world example or experience.</p>
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2. Reciprocal Reading

Reciprocal reading is a **group reading process** where a reading is explored in depth. It is useful for analysing a reading or case study, learning from each other, or generating group discussion. The process can be time consuming, but **highly effective when the purpose of reading is to not only understand the material but to share knowledge**. It can be an enjoyable method of reading text that otherwise might be uninteresting or challenging.

Reciprocal reading is conducted in small groups of 3-5 people. Each person takes a turn to guide the rest of the group through a section of the text. The facilitator uses prompts outlined in the [Reciprocal Reading Prompts](#) study guide to lead the group.

3. PQRST

PQRST is a reading process that helps you keep your mind engaged. It includes aspects of the layering and outlining method. Refer to the [PQRST Method of Reading](#) study guide. THE PQRST acronym stands for

Preview

Question

Read

Summarise

Test

4. Comment Codes

Using comment codes helps keep your mind engaged as you read and think about the material. This method involves creating a coding system that you use to mark the text.

You may create your own set of codes or use a pre-defined set. You may also use symbols or colours to create your own coding system.

Comment codes set example:

A = Agree
DA = Disagree
MI = Main Idea
D = Detail
CTO = Check this out
I = Interesting

(Tertiary Education Commission, 2008)

Using a highlighter while reading

Many students like to highlight as they read.

Although some students find this helpful, it can cause confusion when referring to the text later.

A caution on highlighting



- It is easy to overuse a highlighter, making it difficult to identify important points when looking back over the text.
- When re-reading the eye is usually drawn to highlighted portions of text only, creating the risk that important non-highlighted information is missed.
- The text is permanently highlighted on the first reading, yet with further learning the decision regarding what should be emphasised or highlighted may change.

If you wish to use highlighters, it is preferable to create a colour coding system rather than one colour, to identify which points are main points, examples, details, points to investigate, etc. Refer to point 4, Comment Codes, above.

Material adapted from

Long Beach City College. (2011, February 2). *Great ways to study: LBCC study skills* [Video]. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QLjip0wygAI>

How to study using the Preview, Question, Read, Summary, Test or PQRST Method. (n.d.).

<https://www.wikihow.com/Study-Using-the-Preview,-Question,-Read,-Summary,-Test-or-PQRST-Method>

Reference

Tertiary Education Commission. (2008). *Teaching adults to read with understanding. Using the learning progressions.* <https://ako.ac.nz/knowledge-centre/read-with-understanding/>

Related Guides

[Reciprocal Reading Prompts](#)

[PQRST Method](#)

[Mind mapping](#)

[Planning Study Time](#)

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