

# Reading

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You may be thinking, “Why spend hours reading thousands of pages in my textbooks if my professors are going to cover the material during lectures anyway?” University is **not** like high school. You will find that one of the things that makes this statement very true is the volume of reading that you must do in university. Some students were actually able to perform quite well in high school while doing very little reading. At university, professors frequently do not teach from the textbook as they expect that you can do that reading on your own time.

What the professor is doing in class is expanding on important ideas from the readings and providing new information which is not covered in the class readings. The tests and assignments will include the information from all assigned reading material plus what has been covered during the lecture. Therefore, **it is important to read your textbooks!**

It is expected that, and you will be better prepared if you read the assigned chapters and readings before class. This will help you to have an understanding of what is going to be discussed in the lecture and helps you with your note taking. If you are familiar with the printed material, you know whether or not you have to write down something or if you have seen it in the textbook, you can simply refer to the appropriate page. For more information on note taking see the *Note Taking and Listening* tipsheet.

Reading improves with practice. If you are someone who has not read unless you absolutely had to, you may find it difficult, initially to sit down in front of a thick textbook. Try setting daily goals for yourself for the amount of reading that you need to complete (see the *Time Management* and the *Goal Setting* tipsheets). The amount of reading that you have to do will seem more manageable if you keep up with it on a daily basis rather than leaving those six long chapters until two days before the test.

## General Reading Strategies

- **Read the Assigned Materials.** Don't assume that your professors will cover all of the reading material in class. They assume that you will take the responsibility for completing reading assignments.
- **Read Ahead.** You have a large volume of material to read and it is never too soon to start. If you have no assigned reading for one week for one of your classes take the responsibility to read ahead for the next week. This is helpful in the event that something unexpected happens next week and you have less time for homework. Reading assigned material before class helps you to more easily follow the lecture because you now have a context for what the professor is saying.
- **Read for Comprehension.** Think about what you are reading and how it fits with the lecture material. For students who are taking more than one course in the same subject (i.e., two management courses, two sociology courses) you can think about how the material for those courses is inter-related. You are not reading simply in order to memorize – you need to **understand the material**.

## Steps for Textbook Reading: The SQ3R Method

1. **S**urvey the chapter before you start reading. Look at the chapter title, headings and sub-headings, introductory paragraphs, captions, illustrations, and the bibliography to help you to identify the theme. Make an outline of the chapter, using headings, if the author has not provided one at the beginning of the chapter. Always start by **reading the chapter summary first**, which will “prime your brain” by giving you a sense of the major themes of the chapter.
2. **Q**uestion while you survey. Turn headings, subheadings and/or titles into questions as a way to test your knowledge of the material. Write down any questions that arise as a result of your readings that you would like answered at your next lecture.

3. **Read** for comprehension. If your professor has indicated that some chapters are less important than others you will want to set your priorities accordingly. Clues in the text, such as **bold** headings, and text in *italic* print will help you to select important information. Make connections between the sections that you are reading. It may be helpful for you to form visual images if this is a strategy that helps you to learn and remember. Choose a method of recording key information that works best for you. Some methods include underlining or highlighting, making brief notes in the margin, developing diagrams, making up test questions, and listing key words.
4. **Recite** after you've read a section. Ask yourself questions about the material you've just read. Rephrase the material into your own words in written form (make notes) as this will help you to better remember what you have read.
5. **Review** your textbook notes within 24 hours. Discuss the material with a classmate or try teaching it to someone else. Aim for another major review of your textbook notes once a month until the final exam.

### Self-Assessment Exercise

		Yes	No
1.	I follow my course outlines and read all assigned readings before I go to class.		
2.	I have a quiet place to read where I have good lighting and I am able to concentrate.		
3.	I make notes while reading in order to help me later when I review.		
4.	Once I have finished reading a section of a chapter I re-state what I have read in my own words to confirm that I understood it.		
5.	When I am reading I make note of things that I do not understand so that I can ask my professor later.		
6.	I discuss my readings with a study group to ensure that I am understanding the concepts that I am reading.		
7.	I try to relate what I am reading to other courses that I am taking and to my general knowledge.		
8.	I do my reading in blocks of time so that I retain maximum concentration.		
9.	I keep up with my reading schedule so that I am not overwhelmed with a lot of reading to do at exam time.		
10.	I read newspapers, magazines and novels in order to improve my vocabulary and reading skills.		
Your strengths, as a reader, are indicated by those items to which your response was <b>yes</b> . If your answer to an item was <b>no</b> you may want to develop more effective strategies in that area of reading skills.			

### Resources Available at the Academic Advising & Career Centre

It takes practice to become a skilled reader in University. You will find more detailed information on reading in some of the study skills books in the Academic Advising & Career Centre (AA&CC). Some titles to begin with include: *Learning for Success*, *Improve Your Reading* and *Survey of 300 A+ Students*.