



Whether you are reading your textbook for class, are analyzing the argument in a journal article, or are evaluating the credibility of an internet essay, these reading strategies can help you make the most of your study time and retain information longer. Although these strategies can seem intricate and time-consuming at first glance, they get easier and faster with practice and also save time later when reviewing for exams.

The PRR Approach: Read Your Textbook More Effectively

| Preview | Read | Recall |
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| <p>Why? If you give your mind a general framework of the text's main ideas and structure, you will be better able to comprehend and retain the details you will read later.</p> | <p>Why? Being an active reader will involve you in understanding the material, combat boredom, and increase retention.</p> | <p>Why? Research shows that 40-50% of the material we read is forgotten shortly after we read it. Immediate recall is an essential first step towards continued retention.</p> |
| <p>How?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preview your textbook as a whole: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Title, author's biographical info, publication information, table of contents, introduction or preface, index, and glossary. • Preview the individual chapter: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Title; introduction; sub-headings; diagrams, charts, pictures, etc.; and conclusion. • Make some concrete predictions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What is this text mainly about? ○ How is it organized? ○ How difficult is it? ○ How long will it take to read? | <p>How?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set realistic goals for how long and how many pages you'll be able to read. • Don't try to read the entire chapter in one sitting. Instead, divide it into small sections. • Ask yourself a question before each paragraph or section, then try to answer it as you read. • Try inverting subheadings or first sentences into question form: "who," "what," "when," or "how." • Take short breaks when you feel unable to stay focused. | <p>How?</p> <p>After reading each small section, do one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recall mentally or recite orally the highlights of what you have read. • Ask yourself questions about the reading and answer in your own words. • Underline and make marginal notes of the key words and phrases in the section. Underlining after you read is the best way to decide what the most important information is. • Make separate notes or outlines of what you have read. • Recall with a friend. |

Resources adapted from Peer Academic Coaches Handbook (UT Austin); Anita Harnadek, Critical Reading Improvement (McGraw-Hill, 1978); and Daniel Kurland, I Know What It Says... What Does It Mean? (Wadsworth, 1995).

Critical Reading Strategies: Journal Articles, Essays, and Beyond

Critical reading is really the same thing as critical thinking; it means reading—and thinking—with an open mind, not to agree or disagree, but to discover ideas and information. Being a critical reader doesn't mean criticizing. Instead, it assumes that written texts are not authoritative pronouncements but rather human creations subject to interpretation and evaluation. In essence, everything is up for question.

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| <p>Preview Learn about a text before reading it closely.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Begin with the preview strategies listed in PRR. ❖ Evaluate the text's genre and rhetorical situation (i.e. author, purpose, audience, topic, context). Ask yourself: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Who is the author? What are the author's credentials and what is his/her investment in the issue? ❖ What audience is he or she writing for? ❖ What motivating occasion prompted the writing? What is the author's purpose? ❖ What genre of argument is this? How do the conventions of the genre help determine the depth, complexity, and even appearance of the argument? ❖ What information about the publication or source (journal, magazine, newspaper, advocacy website) explains the angle of vision that shapes the argument? |
| <p>Annotate Record your reactions to and questions about a text directly on the page.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ <u>Mark the text using notations.</u> Use different marks for different purposes (e.g. circle words to define, underline key words or phrases, use question marks to not confusion or disagreement). ❖ <u>Write marginal comments.</u> Define unfamiliar words. Note your responses and questions. Identify interesting writing strategies. Point out patterns. Note what each paragraph <i>does</i> (summarizes opposing view, introduces a supporting reason, etc.) and what it <i>says</i> (main idea). |
| <p>Evaluate the logic of the argument</p> | <p>Three conditions must be met for an argument to be considered logically acceptable:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The support must be <i>appropriate</i> to the claim. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Check to see if all of the evidence is relevant to the claim it supports. ❖ Ask yourself if the authorities the writer invokes and the analogies used to argue a point should be accepted. 2) All of the statements must be <i>believable</i>. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The believability of facts depends on their accuracy, completeness, and the trustworthiness of their sources. ❖ The believability of statistics depend on the accuracy of the methods for gathering and analyzing data and the trustworthiness of the sources. ❖ The believability of authorities, or their credibility, depends on whether the reader accepts them as experts on the topic. 3) The argument must be <i>consistent</i> and <i>complete</i>. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Be sure that all the support works together, that no supporting statement contradicts any of the others, and that no important objection or opposing argument is unacknowledged. |
| <p>Seek out alternative views and analyze sources of disagreement</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Seek out the views of those who disagree with the author to appreciate the full context of the issue. ❖ Identify sources of disagreement. Do they stem from disagreements about the facts or reality of the case, or do they stem from disagreements about underlying values, beliefs, or assumptions, including assumptions about definitions? |

Critical Readers

- 1) Follow evidence where it leads, 2) rely on reason rather than emotion, 3) consider all the possibilities, 4) value exact thinking, 5) consider the source of material before deciding how much weight to assign it, and 6) weigh the effects of motives and biases, both their own or those of the author.