Reading for University Workshop
Seven Principles of Reading & Learning

We read and learn best:

1. When we are interested in what we are reading.

2. When we are actively engaged with what we are reading.

3. When we practice *Elaboration* by associating new material with material we already know. It is establishing meaningful connections that allow for later retrieval of the stored information. It is accomplished by:
   - Thinking about the meaning
   - Noticing relationships
   - Noticing differences

4. When we organize material rather than just trying to assimilate it randomly.

5. When we try to form visual images of the information that we are trying to learn.

6. When we understand what we are reading.

7. When we review what we have learned from our reading. Repetition improves memory, especially if:
   - Elaboration is used each time
   - We recite from memory rather than just using recognition
   - Repetitions are distributed over time
Before You Read the Chapter

Reading a textbook without knowing why you are reading it or what the relevant points are can be very boring and can often result in your mind wandering and little information being absorbed.

6 Strategies to Get You in the Right Frame of Mind

| 1. Prepare | - Decide to read the assigned chapter before the relevant lecture  
|            | - You will get more out of your lectures if you know what  
|            | the professor is talking about ahead of time |
| 2. Change your Thinking | - Consider the chapter reading as exam preparation  
|                          | - Congratulate yourself for starting to prepare for your exams so much in advance |
| 3. Think of Motives | - Ask yourself:  
|                     | • Do I need to read this text? This chapter? Why?  
|                     | • What role does it have in the course? Is it a primary source that will be tested on, or is it a reference used in case of problems?  
|                     | • If I am tested on this text, what format will the test be in (m/c, short answer, essay)?  
|                     | - Answering these questions will influence your approach to the text |
| 4. Raise your Level of Interest | - You will be more engaged with the reading if your interest is high  
|                           | - Interest increases if you can identify personally relevant purposes for the reading  
|                           | • Draw up a list of personally relevant reasons  
|                           | • What do you want to get from it?  
|                           | • What is the value of this material to you? |
| 5. Schedule Time | - Decide how much you are going to read and give yourself a time limit  
|                 | - Work expands to fill the time available  
|                 | • With a self-imposed time limit, you may work harder, concentrate more, and have more free time after |
| 6. Survey | - Survey the chapter before you read it to see what is involved |
Survey Reading

Survey reading is a method of reading where you break down all of the parts in the chapter to activate prior learning and assist in the learning process. By breaking down each element and creating questions and concept maps, you are able to absorb more of the information and end up creating resources to help you study at a later time.

7 Steps of Survey Reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1: Title</th>
<th>Read the title and subtitles of the chapter - Use the title to activate prior learning • Write down what you think the author will cover in this chapter • Write out what you already know about the topic • It may be helpful to use a concept map - We learn best when we associate new knowledge with prior knowledge; this exercise is important to the learning process</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 2: Introduction &amp; Conclusion</td>
<td>Read the introduction and conclusion of the chapter - From memory, write down what the chapter is about • A concept map could prove useful</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 3: Headings</td>
<td>Flip through the chapter, just looking at the headings - If there are no headings, read the first and last sentences of each paragraph - See if you can add more detail to your concept map - Use these headings to formulate questions that you want to have answered - If your text provides questions, read these and be prepared to answer them at the end of the reading - Having questions will help you read with purpose and as a result, help you concentrate and learn more</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 4: Topic Sentence</td>
<td>Read the topic sentence of each paragraph - This will give you an idea of the main ideas and arguments of the chapter in sequence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 5: Pictures, Charts, Diagrams, etc.</td>
<td>Look at the pictures, charts, diagrams, etc. - Read the brief descriptions that accompany them</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 6: Break</td>
<td>Take a 10 minute break - After all that concentration, your brain needs a rest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 7: Read</td>
<td>Read the chapter! - With all your preparation, the chapter should fly by</td>
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While you Read the Chapter

The key to effective reading is to be as actively engaged in the process as possible. There are many different strategies you can use. Choose the ones that work for you.

Learning Strategies:

- **Continue to activate prior learning while you read.**
  - When you come to a new heading or sub-heading, ask yourself what you already know about the topic or what you anticipate is going to be covered

- **While reading, look for the answers to your formulated questions**
  - You’ll concentrate and be more attentive when you are looking for something specific you want answered

- **Take breaks**
  - Keep yourself fresh and focused
  - Try to take a 10 minute break each hour, or a 5 minute break every ½ hour

- **Visualize when you read**
  - We remember visual images more readily than abstract ideas
  - Try to create mental pictures of the information as much as possible

- **Dialogue with the writer**
  - Ask questions.
  - Anticipate what the writer is going to say next
  - Come up with your own examples to illustrate the concepts

- **Reflect while you read**
  - You will understand and remember the material better if you take the time to relate it to other information you know (elaboration)
  - How does this compare/contrast with other ideas on this topic?
  - How does this relate to your personal experience?
  - Can you reorganize this information in another way?

- **Read to understand**
  - Make comprehension your goal

- **Record important information**
  - This is helpful when you are reviewing for exams
Taking Notes

Note-taking is an acquired skill that can be extremely helpful for academic study. To ensure that you are getting the most out of your textbook reading, it is important to participate in active learning.

Read:
- Read for understanding first, you will remember more when you understand the content
- Try to read the section in its entirety before you start note-taking

Recite:
- Take time to recite the important ideas from that section out loud from memory
- Try to put the information into your own words as that ensures that you have understood the material
- If you are unable to restate the important points, go back and read the section again until you are able to
  - If you need to, start slow and build up your memory

Record:
- There are many different ways to record important information, find a method that works best and suits your purpose and the material

Note-Taking Strategies

| Underline/Highlight | - Read the chapter once for understanding, then go back and highlight the main ideas in each paragraph  
|                     |   - Be careful not to highlight too much; you may be overwhelmed when it comes time to review  
|                     |   - This method can a very passive approach, so make sure to concentrate on absorbing the material  |
| Make an Outline     | - Writing down headings and sub-headings will help to create a structure for long term memory  
|                     |   - This outline can be used later as a review tool  |
| Write Key Words     | - Writing key words or brief notes in the margin of the text can be useful for later studying, and is an active method of reading  |
| Summary Notes       | - Taking notes encourages you to interact and think about the material and can be used later for exam prep  
|                     |   - Put them in your own words  
|                     |   - Try not to take too many notes  
|                     |   - Try to read a whole page before summarizing  |
| Diagram             | - Make a diagram of the information to help remember it  |
| Test Questions      | - Make up a list of possible test questions  |
| Make a List         | - Produce a list of important words and their definitions  
|                     |   - Make sure you can relate these terms to the general themes of the chapter and the text  |
After You Read the Chapter

If you have used a number of the strategies so far, review should be easy.

- Try to find some time once every two weeks to review what you have recorded. This is superior to cramming at the end.
- When you review, use Elaboration
  - Think about meaning and how it relates to other information (similarities and differences)
- Look for opportunities to discuss with others what you are reading
  - Informally with friends, in tutorial, lectures, or study groups
- Try to recite important information out loud, from memory
  - This works well if you have made a list of possible questions, key words, or summary outlines
  - If you know you are going to quiz yourself, you will likely concentrate better and learn more

MEMORY TECHNIQUES:

There are many useful memory techniques that enable you to retrieve stored information through self-created associations.

Visual Imagery: Create a visual image representative of the material you are trying to learn

Method of Loci: A mnemonic device which combines a strategy for searching memory along with visual imagery.
- Choose a literal and familiar pathway or place
- Memorize its prominent landmarks
- In your mind, place visual representations of the material you are learning at those landmarks

Mental Association: Come up with an image that relates to both the concept and its meaning (useful for recalling the meaning of terms)

Acronyms: These are words you create from the first letters of a group of terms you are trying to learn
Improving Your Concentration

The ability to concentrate while performing academic work is critical for academic success. Try the following strategies for improving your focus.

| Environment                                      | - Try to find a comfortable, temperate, well lit and ventilated study environment, free of distractions  
|                                                | - Find a place that you use exclusively for study so that the environment becomes associated with concentration  
|                                                | - Avoid studying in bed, so it is associated with sleep  |
| Ignore Distractions                             | - Controlling the impulse to attend to distractions will increasingly make them less distracting  
|                                                | - Try not to get annoyed with distractions, that will make them more influential  |
| Deal With Worries                               | - When distracted by a worry write it down, specify a time you will deal with it and imagine yourself putting it into a jar you can open when you need to  
|                                                | - Relaxation techniques, proper risk assessment, and a specific time where you do all your worrying, can help  |
| Deal With Anxiety or Depression                 | - These two emotional states interfere with your ability to concentrate. A counselor may help in this situation.  |
| Increase Your Motivation                        | - The more motivated you are to learn, the easier it will be to concentrate  |
| Honour Your Body                                | - Your mind will be more inclined to concentrate when your body receives proper nutrition, regular exercise and adequate sleep  |
| Set SMART Study Goals                           | - You’ll be inclined to concentrate when your study goals are Specific, Measurable, Acceptable, Realistic, and Time limited  |
| Peak Time                                       | - Note when you study best and schedule your more demanding or less interesting material for these times  |
| Breaks                                          | - Regular breaks will give your mind a rest  
|                                                | - Gradually increase study time in between breaks  |
| Reward Yourself                                 | - Establish a reward system for concentrated study time  
|                                                | - Rewards should be positive and an immediate result of concentrated effort  |
| Use Active Study Methods                        | - Ask yourself questions, dialogue with your material, quiz yourself, summarize, take sides of an argument, critique  |
| Test Yourself                                   | - Designing a way to test your studying will encourage you to focus on the material and enhance your learning  |
| Self-Monitor                                    | - Keep a record of each time your mind wanders off; this helps increase concentration and monitors improvement  |