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## Active Reading

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### Overview:

When it comes to academic writing, you will find that many of your assignments will be either responses to readings you have read for class or opportunities to demonstrate your absorption of the material from assigned texts. Also, you will need to closely read and evaluate research materials before you can incorporate them into research papers. In other words, reading is very important to the production of writing. Specifically, **reading actively** is necessary for thinking critically about a text and fully comprehending and recalling the material. Active reading usually includes browsing the material before reading, annotating and highlighting or underlining while reading, and reviewing the material after reading. You should develop your own personal active reading process, one that works best for you. Here you will find some suggestions for techniques for active reading of academic texts.

Academic reading is not a passive activity but requires purposeful and active engagement with the text. In order to fully absorb and understand the written material, you must **read actively** by taking steps to understand a text before, during, and after your full reading of it. There are many ways to approach this task. Here, you will find some tips to help you begin developing your own active reading process. You may do all of these things or choose the ones that work best for you and the reading task at hand. The important thing to remember is to stay active, and you can do this by taking steps to engage with the text before, during, and after your full reading of it.

### Preview or scan the text before reading it entirely.

- Look at the title, author, and section headings to get an overview of the material.
- Try to predict what the material will be about and what the main point might be.
- Ask questions about the topic based on headings. You can then try to answer these questions during your reading.

### Actively interact with the text while reading.

- Read slowly. Active reading is not about passing your eyes passively over words, but taking the time to interact with the text.
- Annotate. Write down any thoughts or questions that come to you as you read. Try to answer the questions as you continue reading.
- Highlight or underline the main idea of the reading and the major points that support it.
- Highlight, underline, or circle key terms and things that seem important.
- Highlight, underline, or circle terms that are repeated and words you are not familiar with.
- Write down a summary of each paragraph or section.
- Try to answer the questions you asked when you were previewing the text.

## **Review the material after reading the text fully.**

- Write an objective summary, one where you summarize the main idea and important points of the reading.
- Write an evaluate summary, one where you not only summarize the main idea and important points, but also evaluate the author's argument, effectiveness, or bias.
- Review your annotations and other marks and try to put everything together and draw conclusions from your markings.
- Try to connect the reading to something else. Think about how it fits in with what you're learning in the class for which you have read it.

### **Style Matters:**

Notice that the active reading process begins before your actual reading of the text and ends after. This helps ensure that you thoughtfully consider the reading and try to connect it with things outside the text, rather than simply reading the words on the page. It may seem that this active reading process takes longer than passively reading, and, indeed, it does. However, reading actively helps you get more out of the text and, in turn, more out of your time. For example, if you spend fifteen minutes passively reading a chapter, you probably won't comprehend and remember many of the important points. If you read it actively in, say, half an hour, however, you will be more likely to fully understand and be able to recall what you have read. Active reading helps you make better use of your reading time while improving your comprehension of the material.