Effective Reading

Use this strategy for reading academic textbooks. Effective reading includes the following steps: Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Relate, and Review. The aim is to learn the content as thoroughly and as quickly as possible. Reading with this method is slower than pleasure reading but improves comprehension and retention.

For every reading assignment, you can use these 6 steps:

1. SURVEY
   - Read the titles, headings and subheadings
   - Notice words that are bolded or in italics
   - Look at the pictures and read the captions
   - Read any charts, maps or graphics
   - Read the chapter introduction and objectives
   - Read the chapter summary

2. QUESTION
   - Identify what’s important in the chapter. Some suggestions:
     - Read all the questions in the chapter
     - Look over any assignments or questions you’ll need to complete after you finish reading
     - Ask yourself what you already know about the topic
     - Turn chapter headings into questions
     - Identify what you don’t know
     - Read over your class notes about the chapter
   Some students use these questions to structure their notes

3. READ
   - Read the passage quickly:
     - Don’t take notes
     - Don’t highlight
     - Don’t read anything more than once, even if you don’t understand it on the first try
   - As you read, try to find answers to your questions from Step 2
   - Answer questions at the end of sections in your head and check your answers before continuing
4. RECITE

- Document your learning and answer the questions you asked yourself in Step 2:
  - Take notes (be sure to use your own words)
  - Underline or highlight the important parts
  - Create a mindmap or outline
  - Answer questions out loud
  - Go back to sections you didn’t understand to find the answers to questions

5. RELATE

- You’re more likely to remember information that connects to what you already know. Some suggestions:
  - Connect the information you’ve just documented to what you already know
  - Determine how you could link what you’ve just read with what you’ve learned previously in this class
  - Make up test questions that connect the sections
  - Connect the information with your life experience — have you seen something like this before?
  - Connect the information with your career goal — why would this information be important on the job?

6. REVIEW

- Look over the questions you’ve just answered. Can you answer them without your notes?
- Review your notes and work with the material every day until the material is committed to memory
- Once you know the material, review all your notes once a week until the class ends