

Read Smarter, Not Harder: Strategies to Improve Academic Reading Skills

Reading critically but also efficiently is a valuable skill for all college students, especially when working on writing projects. By this point, you are no longer reading just to memorize or summarize, but you should think of yourself as in conversation with the texts. At the college level, effective reading means knowing something well enough to be able to explain it to someone else. Using these strategies can improve your performance in coursework and help you save time during your research, reading, and writing processes.

Consider Multiple Modalities

- Determine whether a hard copy, digital, or audio version of each reading will work best for you
- Try assistive reading technology like [Read & Write Gold](#) for annotating, translating, or listening to digital texts
- You may prefer hard copies of longer works (e.g., textbooks), but digital copies of shorter works (e.g., articles)

Set Yourself Up for Success

- Identify the reading's genre (textbook, article, lab report, etc.), and think about the author's intended purpose and target audience
- Preview the reading by looking at the chapter titles, section headings, graphs, charts, or illustrations to get a sense of the main idea and organization
- Think about why your instructor has assigned the text, how your professor has framed it, and how the reading fits into the sequence of others in the course
- Generate your own questions about what you want to learn from this text

Read Actively

- Skim any information that seems like review so you can focus primarily on the new knowledge
- Take more time when you come across unfamiliar words or ideas, detailed or technical material, or information you will need to memorize
- As you read, take notes in the margins (even on digital texts). Mark key concepts, questions, or insights.
- Try writing a short paraphrase of the main point(s) at the end of each major section to check whether you can concisely summarize that idea in your own words
- Highlight, underline, or circle important sections of the text
- Find ways to connect the reading to personal experience or other coursework
- Discuss readings with others to gather interpretations and make new discoveries through conversation

Visit the [UVM Undergraduate Writing Center](#) for writing tutoring or the [UVM Tutoring Center](#) for study skills tutoring.

QR Code to More
[Reading Strategy Resources](#)

