Taking Notes from Readings

Taking notes while reading keeps you engaged in the material, so you’re thinking about the ideas on the page as you go and not scrambling to make sense of them all at the end of a long chapter or article.

Taking notes from readings can be a process comprised of several steps that you do once for each reading or many times until you thoroughly understand the material. Try all of the steps to figure out which ones work best for you.

Learning experts call one reading strategy “SQ3R”: **Scan, Question, Read, Recite, Review**.

- **Scan for the basics**
  - Read the Table of Contents or chapter titles.
  - Read bold headings.
  - Read any summaries or discussion questions.
  - Survey any charts, pictures, glossaries, footnotes, etc.

- **Question the context**
  - What concepts are covered?
  - What new terms do I need to know?
  - Who are the key people?
  - What time period does the reading pertain to?
  - How does this reading relate to the skills I need to do well as a student?

- **Read to become familiar**
  - Read from beginning to end, if possible.
  - Pause to think about the ideas or examples as needed, but don't lose sight of the big picture.

- **Recite main points or questions**
  - Write a few words in the margins, on a piece of paper, or in an open document about main points; important names, dates, or places; connections to class; your questions; & your critiques.
  - Keep a list of new words to find in the dictionary.
  - Answer questions at the chapter’s end or on the class discussion board.

- **Review to master the material**
  - Read the chapter or article again.
  - Answer questions and trigger ideas with colleagues.
  - Consider how the reading relates to class topics and assignments.
Taking Notes in Class

You do not have to write down every word the professor says! Read for class ahead of time so you have a basic understanding of the topics. This will allow you to focus on any new or difficult material presented during class.

Remember that each professor has a different presentation style. It may take a few lecture sessions for you to determine how best to identify and note the important information.

Before Class:
- Come to class prepared! Read the texts ahead of time.
- Create a blank page with the date, the main topics, your questions, and lots of blank space for each lecture.

During Class:
- Fill in the page you created with more details about each topic.
- Class discussions often provide the most memorable learning exercises, but they aren’t covered in your textbook or handouts. Be sure to jot down the main points debated and ideas developed. Also write down the discussion questions—they often foreshadow potential test questions.
- For math and sciences, write down the entire problem and the answer.

Have you had these Common Problems?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your mind wanders during the lecture.</th>
<th>Try These Solutions!</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Take a seat near the front of the room. Try to maintain eye contact with the instructor. Stay present by taking notes.</td>
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<th>The instructor speaks too quickly for you to follow while taking notes.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Develop and use a set of abbreviations. For example, try s/b for “should be” and w/ for “with” or GR for “Greece” and MGMT for “Management.”</td>
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| Everything your instructor says seems important or nothing your instructor says seems important. | Carefully prepare for class by looking for key concepts in the readings. Listen and look for details have to do specifically with those topics. |
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| Record the words the way they sound; look up the correct spelling later. Technical terms can be found in the text of the readings and often in the glossary or at the end of a chapter. |

| You get confused by unfamiliar vocabulary. | |
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After Class:
- Rewrite or retype your notes as soon as possible, using your text when available. You may find missing links in your notes or discover links you didn’t think of during class.
- Compare your notes with a classmate. You can see if you thought the same topics were important, if you can answer each other’s questions, and if either of you missed something essential. And, if you ever miss class, you will have someone trustworthy to update you on what was covered.