

Seven Habits of Highly Effective Readers

1. Effective readers adapt reading strategies that match different reading tasks.

How demanding the reading task is depends on the type of reading you do. Recreational reading is fun and we generally read at a much faster pace than when reading for class. For class readings, if this is your first exposure to the information, your reading style will be fairly involved. If it is a review of what you covered in lecture, you might just focus your reading to the parts that clarify confusing parts of the lecture.

2. Effective readers control time, place, and atmosphere to suit the reading task.

If you are reading a fun novel while lying on your bed, chances are you will stay awake. Try it when reading your textbook and most likely it will be a struggle. Demanding reading requires an appropriate setting: a well lit area, a table and upright chair, and a quiet, distraction free environment. It also helps to start with the most difficult reading assignment first. Then as you get tired, you are reading the easiest information.

3. Effective readers spend time previewing the material before reading it.

ALWAYS preview your reading! Your reading efficiency is based on your ability to predict where the material is heading, to see its overall structure, and to relate it to your prior knowledge. By spending 5 to 10 minutes previewing the chapter, you will read with greater understanding and at a faster rate.

Common elements in a chapter to preview before reading:

- Chapter Title: everything in the chapter will relate back to this heading
- Outlines, Objectives, or Introduction: skeleton of chapter structure & content
- Summaries or Conclusions: most important ideas in the chapter
- Headings & Subheadings: the specific topics to be covered
- Pictures, Graphs, & Tables: a picture is worth a thousand words
- End of Chapter Questions: read for the answers to these questions

4. Effective readers divide chapters into manageable groupings.

As you preview the chapter, note its overall length, and choose some stopping points between major headings (typically about every 15-20 minutes). Put a post-it note at those breaking points. When you reach one, take a break: get up, stretch and move around for a few minutes. Then start reading again.

5. Effective readers improve their comprehension by trying to read faster.

If you read at a lazy, habitual pace, your mind isn't challenged and it is easier to lose focus. By trying to read 10%-20% faster, the task demands more of your attention so you become more efficient which leads to better comprehension. This doesn't work with very technical information.

6. Effective readers interact with the text by marking important information.

Marking text while you are reading, keeps you focused and thinking critically about the material. Use the information you obtained while previewing to help identify the points to mark. Hi-lighting is one way of marking (see handout, Beyond Hi-lighting). Be selective – try to mark only 10%-15% of the material.

7. Effective readers use recitation to reinforce what they have just read.

This is a 5 minute process crucial to remembering what you just read. Summarize out loud, in your own words, the key points you just read in the chapter. Recitation moves the information into a more permanent memory bank.

Adapted from Brazosport College