

# Reading Effectively

1. Don't be a quick and "glossy" reader (i.e. reading your text like a novel). Many students do not adapt their speedy reading process for more complex material. They often have difficulty focusing because they read while multitasking with television, internet, and texting.
2. Look for the underlying organization of a text (where is the main argument presented? Where is the situating context, the evidence, the opposing view?)
3. Students (like all people) try to mold what they read into familiar paradigms and experiences, and in the process they may radically misinterpret the nuances of the author's meaning.
4. Work to recognize the rhetorical context or political bias of texts. Be aware that there may also be a wider conversation that authors are responding to, the historical place of the text, or even the reputability of different publications.
5. Try not to get frustrated with sentence structure and vocabulary of primary sources and scholarly articles – take your time with it, make notes of your questions, and be sure to ask them!

## Annotating

### 1. Finish reading before marking.

Never mark until you have finished reading a full paragraph or headed section and have paused to think about what you just read. The procedure will keep you from grabbing at everything that looks important at first glance.

### 2. Be extremely selective.

Don't underline or jot down so many items that they overload your memory or cause you to try to think in several directions at once. Be stingy with your markings, but don't be so brief that you'll have to read through the page again when you review.

### 3. Use your own words.

The jottings in the margins should be in your own words. Since your own words represent your own thinking they will later be powerful cues to the ideas on the page.

### 4. Be brief.

Underline brief but meaningful phrases, rather than complete sentences. Make your marginal jottings short and to the point. They will make a sharper impression on your memory, and they will be easier to use when you recite and review.

### 5. Be swift.

You don't have all day for marking. Read, go back for a mini-overview, and make your markings. Then attack the next portion of the chapter.

### 6. Be neat.

Neatness takes conscious effort, not time. Later when you review, the neat marks will encourage you and save time, since the ideas will be easily and clearly perceived.

### 7. Organize facts and ideas under categories.

Items within categories are far more easily memorized than random facts and ideas.

### 8. Try cross-referencing.

For example, if you find an idea on page 64 that has a direct bearing on an idea back on page 28, draw a little arrow pointing upward and write "28" by it. Then turn back to page 28 and alongside the idea there, draw an arrow pointing downward and write "64" by it. In this way you'll tie the two ideas together, in your mind and in your reviewing.

### 9. Be systematic.

There are many ways to mark the text: single and double underlines; the use of asterisks, circling, boxing for important items; and the use of top and bottom margins for longer notations. If some of these ideas appeal to you, work them into your marking system, one or two at a time. But use them consistently so you will remember what they mean at review time.