

Total Wellness Program



Active Reading Strategies

Reading is a form of thinking, not a passive activity. The more you actively engage in the material you are reading, the easier it will be to master the material, retain it in your long-term memory, and apply it. Use the following four steps each time you read for efficient and effective reading sessions.

1. Preview

Ease yourself into the reading assignment by spending a few minutes previewing the material. Glance through topic headings and skim introductory and summary paragraphs to get an overview of the reading. This warms your brain up and gets it ready construct knowledge from the reading.

2. Intense Reading

Now that you have a sense of what to expect from the reading, begin reading the material carefully for ideas. Convert small units of information into questions and explanations (What is being said? Why is this important? How does this relate to . . .? How does this connect to or expand on what I already know? What else do I need to know?). This will help in remembering and applying the information. Stop periodically to recall what you have read. Say to yourself out loud or write down a key phrase that sums up the major point of the section. Use your own words—don't just copy a phrase from the book. Intensive reading demands total concentration and is best done at short intervals, not in one long, grueling session.

3. Review

Take a short (5-10 minute) break to give your brain and eyes a rest (stand up and stretch, breathe deeply, or get a snack). Then skim the material you just read. At each section heading, test yourself by summarizing the information or briefly explaining the material's significance. If you come to a part you don't immediately recall or understand, return to intense reading. Continue this process until you feel you have a good mastery of the entire reading.

4. Summarize

Create a written summary, outline, or concept map to briefly summarize the material. Do as much as you can from short-term memory but check against the text to ensure that you didn't miss anything important. As you summarize, consider: How does the material fit with the patient case you're studying, what you've learned during this or past blocks, or know from other classes or experiences? What are the implications or applications of this material? What questions are you left with? You can use these summaries for review or to test yourself throughout the block.