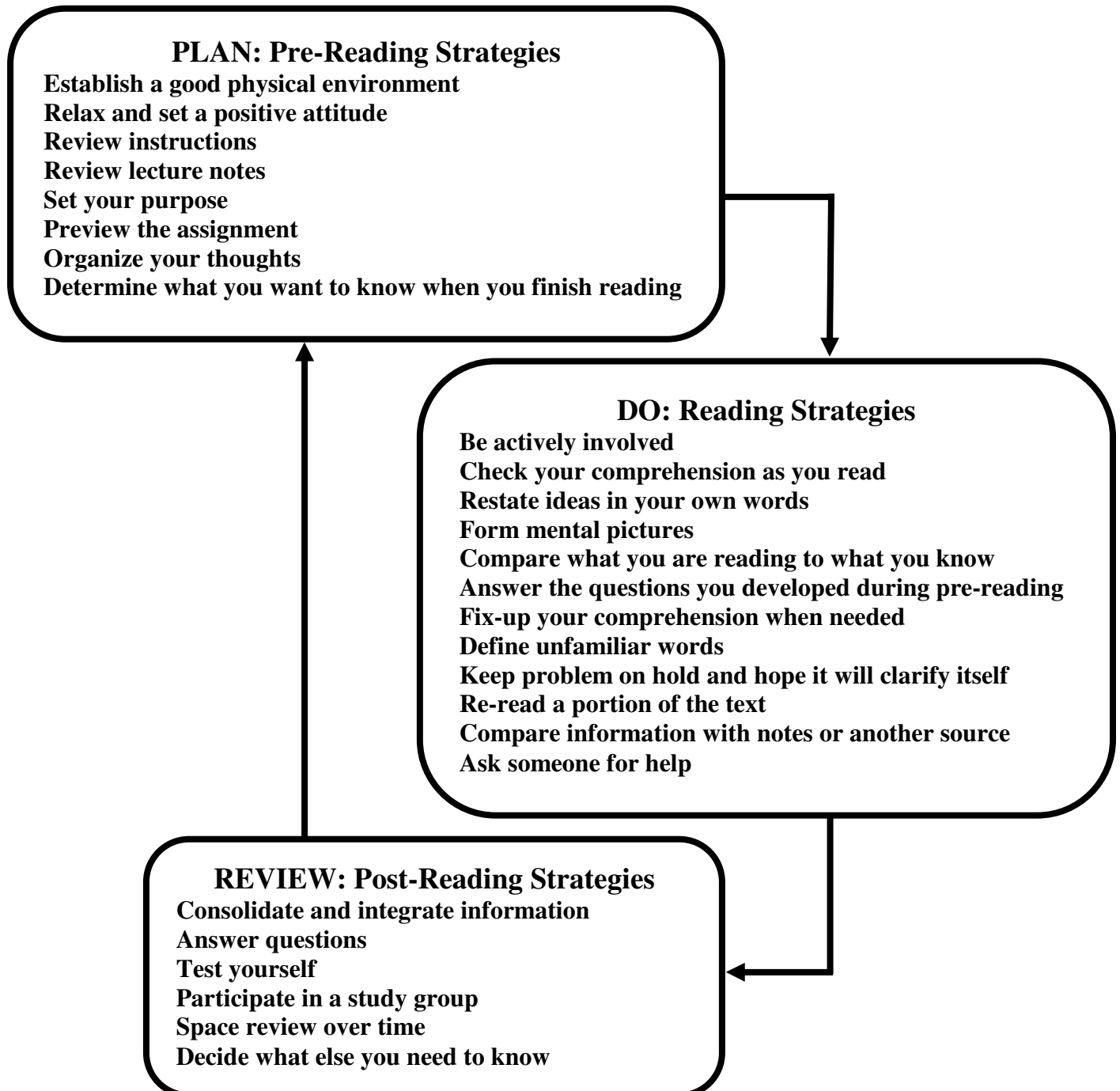


An Effective Textbook Study Strategy

Everyone looks for ways to be more successful. American executives strive to compete with aggressive foreign competitors, teachers seek ways to enrich student learning, and students, like you, search for ways to improve academic performance.

So, how can you, like a company president or a college professor, improve your chances for success? First, realize that whether your goal is to improve performance on a widget production line or a sociology final exam, the basic blueprint can be the same: you plan what you need to do; you implement your plan; you review how well you did. Then, since goals such as zero defects or, in your case, understanding more of what you read, can't always be met the first time you complete your plan, you view reading as a cycle instead of a one-shot activity.



See the reverse side for more detail on using this strategy.

More About Effective Textbook Study

Plan Prime your brain.

Establish a good environment. Place yourself in surroundings that help your ability to concentrate and encourage good posture and a ready-to-work attitude.

Relax and set a positive mental Attitude. Set yourself up to be successful. Do your study-reading when you are at your mental best. Have confidence in yourself; know that you can read successfully and accomplish the goals you set.

Review instructions. Check any comprehension guidelines you have been given such as “read this in preparation for tomorrow’s lecture,” or “read to see how this author differs from what I’ve said today,” or “review all of the material we covered in preparation for the exam.”

Review any lecture notes. Reread any notes you have on this topic, looking for topics or ideas you need to clarify, words you need to define, or names and dates you need to fill in.

Set your purpose. Match the way you read to your purpose. For instance, reading for enjoyment does not require the full understanding that reading to prepare for a psychology lecture requires, and those demands are different from reading for a chemistry exam. Clarify your purpose before you begin to read, and you’re more likely to be successful and less likely to waste time.

Preview the assignment. To preview, read the chapter objectives; read headings/subheadings; read introductory and concluding paragraphs; read boldface and italic words and phrases; highlight/clarify unfamiliar vocabulary; examine graphics; and review end-of-chapter summaries and questions. Take advantage of anything that helps you understand the organization and core ideas.

Organize your thoughts. Based on the chapter objectives and headings/subheadings, jot down the major topics you are going to be reading about. Then, write a few words about what you know on each of the topics.

Clarify what you want to know when you finish reading. If you don’t read to find out something specific, you probably won’t. One way to read for something specific is to phrase the chapter’s objectives or headings/subheadings as questions and then read to answer those questions.

Do Be active. Think.

Restate ideas in your own words. At the end of a sentence or paragraph, rephrase the idea in your own words.

Form mental pictures. Stop and build a mental picture of what the author is saying.

Compare what you are reading to what you know. Ask how does new information fit with what I know? Does it reinforce, contradict, or add new information?

Answer questions. Connect what you are reading to questions you need to answer.

If you don’t understand what you are reading, use one of these fix-up strategies to get back on track:

Define unfamiliar words. Understand the words the author uses. Check the context, glossary, lecture notes, or a dictionary, or ask someone.

Use chapter objectives and headings/subheadings. Reread objectives and headings/subheadings for the unclear passage for ideas or concepts that help you to understand.

Review related graphics. Reread any graphic and its explanation to see if it clarifies the text information.

Reread a portion. Try reading the sentence or paragraph again with the specific goal of clarifying your question.

Keep the problem on hold and hope it will clarify itself. If the problem is just one sentence or paragraph, you can mark it and continue reading. It’s possible that the next sentence or paragraph will help you.

Compare information with notes or another source. Find and read about the topic or idea in another book to see if a different approach helps your understanding.

Ask someone. If you still don’t understand after you’ve clarified the vocabulary; reread the objectives, headings/subheadings, graphics, and unclear passages; and reviewed other information you have, ask someone for help.

Review For perspective & memory.

Reread thoughts you’ve organized and questions you’ve answered during reading. Make use of the work you did during your planning and reading.

Answer questions. Write out or talk through the answers to the questions you set out in your plan.

Consolidate and integrate information. Combine your knowledge, what you’ve gained from reading, and your lecture notes to form one coherent picture.

Participate in a study group. Join a group of classmates to talk about what you have read. Try reviewing concepts with one another, sharing notes, and taking practice tests.

Test yourself. Make up a test on the material or have a classmate make one up and test yourself. Make a set of Question-Answer flash cards for a convenient carry-along review tool by writing the question on one side of a 3x5 card and the answer on the reverse side.

Continue the cycle

Occasionally, on small assignments or familiar material, you will achieve your reading comprehension goals at the end of one plan>do>review cycle. On the other hand, when you’re reviewing, don’t be surprised to discover gaps in your knowledge. When you do, just develop a new plan that will help you fill in the missing information. Reread the portion of the assignment you need to get the information and then review, making sure to integrate the new information with what you already have.