

READING PROCESS STRATEGIES

The key to successfully absorbing meaning as you read is to **think about what you are thinking about**. The reading process contains three different stages: before reading, while reading, and after reading. Applying certain thought strategies during each stage of the reading process will help you to absorb and analyze a text's content to the fullest.

Tip: Don't feel pressured to read the text in one sitting and come away with a full understanding of the material. Instead, break your reading time into 50 minute time blocks, and use the last 10 minutes of the hour to take a break. Allow yourself the space you need to think through the material as you read.

STRATEGIES FOR THE STAGES

1. **Before Reading** - Your goal in this stage is to get an overview of the material and establish why you are reading it.
 - a. Survey the introductory material. Read the front and back covers (if applicable), the introduction and conclusion paragraphs of the text you intend to read, as well as the title, headings, and subheadings within that section.
 - b. Determine what seems to be the main point of the text. Consider what you believe the topic will be and review what you already know and think about that topic. Connect the topic to your academic goals, your life, and your faith.
2. **While Reading** - In this stage, your goal is to engage with the text rather than passively gloss over it.
 - a. Think about the material as you read it: take shorthand notes, highlight key terms, and define unknown vocabulary.
 - b. Clearly identify the author's main point. What is their thesis statement?
 - c. Pause occasionally to talk aloud about what you are reading, both the author's writing and your opinion. Even if you are only talking to yourself, this helps you understand and retain the information better.
3. **After Reading** - Your goal here is to summarize and respond to what you read.
 - a. Depending on your individual learning style, you might find that you prefer either writing or talking aloud to summarize and reflect.
 - b. Once you have summarized for yourself, start a conversation with someone else about the issue. Include some of the facts as presented by the author as well as your own opinion. Often, this step will occur during a course lecture. However, if your class's lectures are less discussion-oriented, find your own avenue to discuss with peers.

- c. Finally, respond to the text with a creation of your own. Often, this step occurs through the natural flow of your course writing assignments.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

A primary way to engage with what you are reading is to ask yourself questions about a passage as you go. Below is a list of questions, in part derived from Andrianatos (2018) and Cardénas (2019), to ask during each step of the reading process.

1. **Before Reading** - Ask yourself the following questions, as applicable:
 - a. What is the topic, and what do I already know about this topic?
 - b. Why does this issue matter? (Consider how the topic is related to your own life, to your faith, and to your goals. Also consider why it matters to others.)
 - c. Based on the cover material, what do I predict this author's opinion will be?
 - d. What do I currently believe about this issue?
 - e. What questions do I have about the material or topic?

2. **While Reading** - Continue to ask yourself questions as you read:
 - a. Were my pre-reading predictions accurate?
 - b. What are the main ideas in the text?
 - c. What parts of the text are difficult to understand or agree with?
 - d. What is the author's thesis statement and final conclusion, and what logic does he or she use to support that conclusion?
 - e. Do I agree?
 - f. Does this material align with a biblical worldview? Why or why not?
 - g. How does this text relate to what I have read before on this topic?
 - h. What questions do I have about this material?

3. **After Reading** - Consider the following questions for personal reflection:
 - a. Could I successfully summarize the author's argument in my own words?
 - b. What questions did I have about this topic, and did the text answer them? If so, how?
 - c. Has this text affirmed or changed my previous opinion on the issue? How so?
 - d. Who or what else could help me understand this text and its topic better?

PRACTICE NOW

References

- Andrianatos, K. (2018). *First year university students' reading strategies and comprehension: implications for academic reading support* [Doctoral dissertation, North-West University]. North-West University Digital Archive. <http://hdl.handle.net/10394/28756>.
- Cárdenas, A. I. (2019). Enhancing reading comprehension through an intensive reading approach. *HOW Journal* 27(1), 69-82. <https://doi.org/10.19183/how.27.1.518>.