

Engaging Effectively with the Learning Materials: Reading, Lectures, and Beyond

Workbook

Workbook Intro

Welcome to the Engaging Effectively with the Learning Materials: Readings, Lectures, and Beyond workbook.

This resource will help further develop the concepts you learned in the accompanying online module, and help support you in better understanding how to effectively engage with course material. This workbook is broken down into three sections: Reading, Engaging with Course Content and Content Review.

This workbook will provide key definitions, overview of concepts and skills and a space to practice new techniques.

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Reading

Self-Reflection

Before exploring learning strategies to help engage with course readings, take a few minutes to think about your current reading strategies by answering these reflective questions.

What do you consider your strength(s) to be when reading a textbook?

An academic article?

A piece of literature?

Which types of readings do you find most challenging (e.g. textbook, academic article, literature)?

When considering your studies, do you think that you are spending an appropriate amount of time on your readings?
Why or why not?

What techniques do you use when reading your textbook?

An academic article?

A piece of literature?

Where do you think there is room to grow in the area of reading?

Key Terms

Active Reading:

Using strategies to engage with the text to promote understanding and recall. Strategies can include note-taking, annotation, selective highlighting, etc. and help the reader identify the key information he or she wants to remember, ask questions about or connect to other ideas.

Critical Reading:

Helps readers think about the validity or relevance of the information and ideas they are reading. Readers ask critical questions of the text in order to promote greater understanding of the content and the purpose of the text.

Deep Reading (or Close Reading):

Reading for meaning in a literary text that moves past the plot. Consider how narrative elements contribute to the deeper meaning of the whole text. It is also important to think about the text in its context.

Noting (or reading) for Gist:

A technique where the reader identifies the key concept(s) of each paragraph. Particularly useful for academic articles and books. The reader makes a brief marginal note or annotation (word or phrase) for each paragraph.

Scanning:

A technique where a reader looks at the structure of a text to help familiarize himself or herself with the content. It's especially useful as a first step of the scan, read, review process for reading textbooks. Making note of headings and chapter objectives/review questions helps readers anticipate and identify key information when reading.

Skimming:

A technique that readers use to quickly locate information in a reading or to determine whether a particular reading has relevance to the task at hand.

Checklist

Getting ready to read

When preparing to read course material, it's important to consider a few things before hitting the books. What is the environment you're planning to read in like? Are you tired? Do you feel cold or hungry? Are you waiting for an important email or engaged in a Facebook chat? It's important to take these things into consideration before you sit down to read so that you can ensure you're retaining the most information you can. Use this environmental checklist to help you discern whether or not you're ready to start reading:

- I'm not too tired, so I won't fall asleep
- I'm in a space where I'm not likely to get interrupted
- There's enough space for me to spread out with my books, laptop, notebook and anything else I need for reading
- There's good lighting to set the mood for my reading
- I'm at a comfortable temperature and not hungry
- My phone's on silent and I've logged out of my social media accounts
- I like the space where I'm going to read and try to read here regularly
- There aren't people around me chatting
- I am comfortable enough that I'm not going to want to take lots of long breaks throughout my allotted reading time

Anti-Online Distraction Apps

Apps to block social media

It can be hard to get ready to read when you feel compelled to browse Facebook, check Instagram, or see what's trending on Twitter. To help eliminate the distraction of social media, here are some apps to help you temporarily block your online accounts and help you get in the mood to read course content.

Anti-Social

Anti-Social is an app that allows you to target and block any distracting website in order to allow you to work more productively. Anti-social works for Mac and Windows for a nominal fee.

Hyperlink: <http://anti-social.cc/>

Cold Turkey

Cold Turkey allows you to block distracting websites and apps. Cold Turkey allows you to set goals, and take breaks as per your study schedule. Cold Turkey blocks sites and apps on all browsers and is free. The software currently only runs on Windows, but a similar product called "Self Control" is available for Mac users at: <http://selfcontrolapp.com/>

Hyperlink: <http://getcoldturkey.com/>

Freedom

Freedom will eliminate your access to the Internet for a set period of time based on your work schedule and desired

limitations. The software works on both Windows and Mac devices, and is available for a nominal fee.

Hyperlink: <http://macfreedom.com/>

Highlighting

If you choose to highlight or underline the main ideas of the text you are reading, practice being selective.

Read to understand a few paragraphs before stopping, take a moment to consider the content and then select key ideas to highlight or underline.

To further develop basic highlighting and underlining, you can use a variety of symbols to highlight key information, like boxes, brackets, circles, stars and so on.

Remember, if you over-highlight, then nothing will really stand out. It's important to try to get in the habit of highlighting sparingly.

It can be hard to study from highlighting alone, so it's a good idea to try and use highlighting in conjunction with other recording methods like marginal notes or mnemonic devices.

Tools for Digital Highlighting

Open your PDF in Adobe Reader (you can download it here: <https://get.adobe.com/reader/>)

Click on comment at the right of the PDF screen and look for the annotation tool bar (if you don't see Comment, go to the View drop down bar, then to Comment, and Annotation should appear as an option there).

Opening this will allow you to access resources like a highlighter, a shape drawing tool and a comment feature.

Try highlighting text, circling important information with the shape drawing tool and applying comments into the PDF if

you have any questions or connections you would like to remind yourself of.

Practice Highlighting

In order to improve your ability to highlight, try practicing with a text from your course. If your course does not have any digital texts, ask your professor for suggestions.

Reading Textbooks

When reading, it is important to be aware of the type of genre you are assigned. There are different strategies to use when it comes to reading a textbook, academic article or piece of literature.

In this section, we will review activities to help engage with strategies of active reading when you've been assigned content from a textbook.

Skimming

Is a practice of selective reading in which you aim to read what is important and ignore what isn't.

When:

Used to get an overview, find facts or find material you need.
Do not use it when you need to pay attention to detail or read for full comprehension

How:

- Read the table of contents
- Read the intro, summary, headings
- Read the first and last lines of each paragraph
- Look through the words for specific information, key words and stop when you get to them
- From this, make inferences about the author's meaning

Take some time to practice skimming material from your course.

List any key words you came across in your reading:

What inferences can you make about the author's intended purpose within this reading?

Scan, Read, Review

Textbooks are designed to do a lot of your work for you. From bold to italic print, added pictures, charts, graphs, key terms, summaries and review questions, textbook authors try to make their information easy for you to retain. Getting to know how to scan, read and review will make it a lot easier for you to read efficiently and effectively.

Skimming versus Scanning:

These techniques are very similar, but scanning requires less reading and focuses more on establishing an understanding of what you need to pay close attention to when you read.

Scan

Scanning helps you gain an understanding of the material you are going to be reading. To scan, look for bold or italic font, and take note of titles, pictures and graphs. When scanning, it's helpful to read the introduction, summary and review questions included in the specific textbook section.

Take some time to practice scanning your course material.

What do you think the question is you should be looking to answer while reading? Did you find the answer?

Read

When you're reading with a purpose, it's easy to stay focused and build an understanding. To provide a purpose for your reading, use tricks like turning subheadings into questions. Keep your question in mind as you read and at the end of your reading, see if you can answer it. Consider the things you noted when scanning the text, read to determine why certain words may be in bold or italic, and why certain graphs, charts, images or questions may have been included in the text.

Review

After scanning and reading your text, you may consider your work done, but taking a few extra minutes to review has the potential to make a big difference in how much information you retain from the reading. When you review, you strengthen your ability to remember more information later.

To review, start by asking yourself "what is the main idea of this reading?" and take some time to rescan the material from the beginning to check your comprehension. This time, try to state the purpose of each subheading, define key terms and reflect on the significance of words in bold or italics.

What is the main idea of the material you scan, read, and reviewed?

Try writing out some questions you may not have resolved within the reading, or some key ideas you learned:

Reading Academic Articles

When reading, it is important to be aware of the type of genre you are assigned. There are different strategies to use when it comes to reading a textbook, academic article or piece of literature.

In this section, we will review an activity to help engage with strategies of active reading when you've been assigned content from an academic article.

Noting for Gist

For each paragraph, write a marginal note summarizing the key idea or what you think will be the most important element of that paragraph. Once you're done reading, your marginal notes can be used as a point-form summary of the reading. If it's helpful to you, you can use those notes to write a brief summary of the content you've read.

Using academic reading material from your course, try practicing noting for gist.

Reading Literature

When reading, it is important to be aware of the types of genre you are assigned. There are different strategies to use when it comes to reading a textbook, academic article or pieces of literature.

In this section, we will review an activity to help engage with strategies of active reading when you've been assigned a literary reading.

Rhetorical Analysis

When reading a piece of literature, try and read to interpret meaning within the text.

Work to identify the literary elements within the narrative you are reading in order to try and understand their significance.

Look for elements like:

- Theme
- Plot
- Setting
- Characters
- Conflict
- Climax
- Speaker/narrator
- Tone
- Repetition
- Patterns
- Structure

Don't just identify these elements; ask how the author has incorporated them and why they were presented.

Think about how the parts contribute to the meaning of the whole and consider how the text relates to its context.

Pay attention and make note of your initial responses to the work, shifts in tone or plot, repetition of words, images or motifs, patterns or contradictions in the language, any questions you have when reading the text, connections you notice within the text and connections you notice between the text and other sources.

Take some notes about the structure a literary reading from your course. Think about what kind of elements you notice and why you think the author chose to include them. Can you make any connections to this text to anything else you've learned or come across in the past?

Note Taking

During Course Time

During your course, it is important to be aware of the types of lectures you may come across in an online course. There are different strategies to consider when taking notes, depending on how your course content is being administered.

In this section, we will review strategies of active note taking, to use during your online course.

Self-Reflection

Before exploring learning strategies to help engage with course content, take a few minutes to reflect on your current note taking strategies by answering these reflective questions.

What are your strengths when taking notes on a lesson?

What do you think is your biggest challenge when taking notes in your online course?

What strategies are you presently using to take notes?

What aspects of these strategies do you find to be effective?

What aspects of these strategies do you feel are not effective?

Have you tried different note taking strategies before?

What were they and why did you not continue with them?

Key Terms

Active Listening:

Using aural and visual strategies during lectures or lesson delivery to identify important ideas and concepts for note taking. Listeners should pay attention to cues such as tone, volume, repetition, and body language.

Cornell Method:

A particular note taking style that encourages active review post-lesson. It structures the page into columns and uses a blend of key terms and content notes.

LMS:

(Learning Management Systems) Are the online platforms that universities use to deliver course content for hybrid and fully online courses.

Parallel Note Taking:

Occurs when a student is given lecture notes from the professor prior to or after the lesson. Students can augment notes received beforehand with their own notes during the lesson or can add notes they took during a lesson to the notes provided after the lesson.

Visual Note Taking:

An approach to note taking that enables students to visually represent connections between ideas or comparisons between concepts. Examples include mind-mapping, chart making, or graphics.

Checklist

Preparing for course content

When preparing to engage with course material, it's important to consider a few things before reviewing content your professor has posted. Do you have a stable Internet connection? Are you tired? Do you feel too warm or hungry? Are you expecting a phone call or distracted by Instagram? It's important to take these things into consideration before you sit down to engage with course material in order to ensure that you can retain the most information you can. Use this environmental checklist to help you discern whether or not you're ready to engage with course content:

- I've got a stable Internet connection
- I don't have a lot of tabs open
- My phone's on silent and I've logged out of my social media accounts
- I'm not too tired, so I won't fall asleep I'm at a comfortable temperature and not hungry
- I'm in a space where I'm not likely to be interrupted
- In the case of an audio lecture, I've got headphones or good speakers connected

Cornell Method

In order to take notes in the Cornell Method style, before class you should put the subject of your lesson, the course code, and date and page number at the top of your page, either by hand in or in a blank document on screen.

Divide the page into two columns. If you are taking longhand notes, draw a line down your paper about 2-3 inches from the left side. If you are taking notes on a computer, insert a table with 2 columns into your note document.

During lesson time, record the most important facts and ideas in the right column of your notes. Try to leave some extra space between ideas and topics to make your notes easier to read later. You should also try to use abbreviations or even symbols, so that you can take your notes faster.

Watch this lecture and practice taking notes in the Cornell Method style. You can record your notes in the space below or on a separate piece of paper.

[Click here to access LaToya Ruby Frazier's lecture on a visual history of inequality in industrial America](https://www.ted.com/talks/latoya_ruby_frazier_a_visual_history_of_inequality_in_industrial_america#t-77137)

(For those using a print version of this workbook, follow this URL:

https://www.ted.com/talks/latoya_ruby_frazier_a_visual_history_of_inequality_in_industrial_america#t-77137)

Visual Note Taking

Some students find visual note taking strategies to be an effective way to keep track of the content being delivered in a course.

One strategy some students like for note taking is mind mapping. Mind maps encourage you to try to select the main idea, keep your notes brief, and help demonstrate the connections between different parts of the lesson.

Another form of visual note taking that some students find helpful for particular kinds of information is creating charts. This approach is particularly useful when you are learning about how things compare with one another.

Watch this lecture and practice taking visual notes on a separate piece of paper. If you are using a printed version of this workbook you can record your notes in the space provided below.

[Click here to access Asha de Vos' lecture about whales and ocean ecology](#)

(For those using a print version of this workbook, follow this URL:

https://www.ted.com/talks/asha_de_vos_why_you_should_care_about_whale_poo#t-31652)

Parallel Note Taking

If your professor provides notes or slides before the lesson begins, you have the option to try parallel note taking. With the notes or slides in front of you (either in print or on screen), simply record new details and key ideas that you hear or are shown during the lesson beside the slides that you have already been given. Your new notes will parallel the notes you already received.

A good suggestion is to focus on recording only the ideas and information your professor adds to the notes you were previously given. This enhances efficiency because you don't need to re-record information. Plus, don't forget to try to leave space so you have the option to write additional notes later.

You can practice parallel note taking by recording notes on this PowerPoint Presentation from the Modern Museum of Art (MOMA) in New York. To enhance the content provided on the slides, record additional notes about the lecture from the content provided in the "Share this information with your students" section.

[Click here to access the MOMA's slide lecture on pop art](https://www.google.ca/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=6&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=oCD)

(For those using a print version of this workbook, follow this URL:

<https://www.google.ca/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=6&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=oCD>)

In an online learning environment, your professor may create PowerPoint presentations in a variety of ways; some may be like this MOMA example, with content already filled into PowerPoint's note section. Remember, you can print these slides off and write your own notes by hand next to the slides,

or add your own notes into the note box in a different colour
or with a different font.

Course Review

Reviewing material

In every course, it is important set some time aside to review the content you have engaged with through reading and by taking notes.

In this section, we will examine some strategies to help with your review.

Self-Reflection

Before exploring learning strategies to help engage with review skills, take a few minutes to consider your current strategies by answering these questions.

What strategies do you use to remember information from a lesson?

Is there a particular subject(s) that you find more challenging to review than others?

How long are you able to remember a particular piece of information?

Does this change depending on whether or not you have reviewed course lessons?

Key Terms

Acronym:

A word formed from the first letters of other words. Helps with recall of information.

Acrostic:

A phrase in which the first letters of each word represent particular concepts.

Jingle:

A phrase that uses rhythm and rhyme and is easy to recall. Can be used to remember information.

Method of Loci:

The association of different pieces of information with familiar locations as a memory aid.

Mnemonic Device:

Are memory aids to improve recall of information.

Retention of Information:

The ability to move concepts into long term memory and recall them later.

Checklist

Preparing for Review

- I have my reading notes and lesson content notes
- It's been 24 hours or less since I reviewed the lesson content from my professor
- I have a space with limited distractions and enough room to comfortably spread out with my notes
- My phone's on silent and I've logged out of my social media accounts
- I'm comfortable, the temperature is nice and I'm not hungry
- I know how to contact my professor/instructor or campus learning support services in case I would like help, or more support understanding the course material or with review strategies.

Mnemonic devices

During post-lesson review, it is a good idea to think about different methods that help you recall information.

Mnemonic devices are excellent tools to use in order to retain information from your notes. There are a number of types of mnemonic devices, for example:

Jingles

Create a musical rhyme to help remember content: “30 days have September, April, June and November; all the rest have 31, February’s a different one...” is a jingle to help recall the number of days in each month.

Acronyms

Create a word from the first letters of a series of words, for example, some people say HOMES to remember the Great Lakes (Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie and Superior).

Acrostics

Create sentence to help you remember a series of letters or words that stand for something; for example some people say “Never Eat Shredded Wheat” to remember the North, East, South and West points on a compass.

Once they are created, these memory aid devices can be added to your notes to help you review and retain the content you’ve just learned; for example, add an acronym or acrostic to the left-hand column in Cornell, in the blank space on your page, or in a spot on a mind map. Overall, the goal of these devices is to help you to remember lesson information in a catchy way. Have a look at your notes from your online course: is there anywhere you would benefit from creating a mnemonic device to remember the content better?

Construct your own mnemonic devices for remembering some of your course content or the key terms discussed in this chapter. Make something like a poem, jingle, acronym or acrostic. You can even use your own mnemonic system. Detail your mnemonic device in the space provided below.

Workbook

Wrap Up

Further Reading

Making Inferences

Keys to College Success, by Minnette Lenier and Janet Maker.

Page 49

4 Questions for Reading Critically

Keys to College Success, by Minnette Lenier and Janet Maker.

Page 49

Chapter 4: Learning from Lectures

Chapter 5: Learning from Textbooks

Chapter 6: Effective Memory

Learning for Success: Effective Strategies for Students 4th

Edition, by Joan Fleet, Fiona Goodchild, Richard Zajowski.

(2006).