

MASTERING THE COLLEGE TEXTBOOK

Previewing

- Step 1 Read the chapter title, introductory paragraphs, headings and sub-headings. Close the book and ask yourself:
- What is the chapter about?
 - Can I outline the chapter, recreating the headings?
- Step 2 Divide the chapter into sections. Preview each section by turning headings and sub-headings into questions. Then, **read only the first sentence of each paragraph**. If the sentence is too long, stop after two lines. If it is too short, read a second sentence. If the first sentence seems unimportant, read the last sentence of the paragraph. Ask yourself:
- What is the section about?
 - Were my questions answered? Answer them.
- Step 3 Repeat Step 2 until you have previewed all sections of the chapter. At this point, you should be able to provide a reasonable outline of the chapter, including main and supporting ideas. It is also very important to retell in your own words as much as you can remember from previewing the chapter. Refer back to the text only when your memory falters.

Active Reading

Now that you have finished previewing the chapter and have a rough outline in your head, go back to the beginning and read through the entire chapter, section by section.

- Step 4 Ask yourself the same questions you asked at each heading and sub-heading. The entire time you read, look for answers to your questions. When you finish reading a paragraph or group of paragraphs,
- highlight or note in the margin what you now think is the most important point to remember.
- Step 5 At the end of each heading, stop and ask yourself:
- What are the most important points to remember from this section of the chapter?
 - What are the supporting ideas?
 - What are the meanings of some key terms?

It is very important not to over-highlight. Entire sentences do not have to be highlighted or underlined, **only the most important words**.

Top 10 Reasons to Use This Reading Strategy

1. You can better distinguish more important ideas from lesser ones when you know where a text is heading. For example, a repeated name, place, or concept gives you a clue about its importance. Consequently, when actually reading through the chapter (Step 4), it is easier to identify and highlight the main points.
2. When you are reading to find answers to questions you posed earlier or trying to figure out what point the author is making, you are actively engaged with the text. This requires concentration and makes it harder for you to doze off.
3. The active reading described above also helps you remember the material better.
4. All of the steps ask you to retell the material in your own words, preferably from memory. When you do this out loud, you have the advantage of hearing yourself talk about the main points. Exposure to the information through two mediums -- auditory (hearing) as well as visual (seeing) -- helps you remember the material better.
5. Previewing and active reading require you to process the material more than once. This repeated exposure to information helps you remember the material better.
6. When you have little background knowledge about a subject such as in many first year survey courses, it becomes doubly hard to understand completely new material. Previewing helps build up this deficit of prior knowledge.
7. If you are pressed for time and simply can't read the entire chapter before going to the lecture, previewing is infinitely better than not reading at all.
8. O.K. So I can't think of 10 reasons.