Muscle Reading

Before you read: Pry Out Questions

Step 1: Preview
Step 2: Outline
Step 3: Question

While you read: Root Up Answers

Step 4: Read
Step 5: Underline
Step 6: Answer

After you read: Recite, Review, and Review Again

Step 7: Recite
Step 8: Review
Step 9: Review again

Before You Read

Step 1: Preview Setting the Stage

- Briefly preview the table of contents
- Flip through the text (or chapter) page by page to see what’s there
- Look for familiar concepts, facts, or ideas
- Look for ideas that spark your imagination or curiosity
- Check out drawings, diagrams, charts, graphs, and pictures
- Notice summary statements – if the assignment is long or complex, read the summary first
- Read all the chapter headlines, section titles, and paragraph headlines
- Reflect on what you already know about the subject
- Determine your reading strategy: Can I do what I need to do by skimming the chapter, or do I need to use all nine Muscle Reading steps

Step 2: Outline Make Complex Information Easier to Understand

- Not for fiction or poetry
- For easy assignments, a 10-second mental outline will do
- For complex material, understand the structure of what you are about to read
- If text has a chapter outline, study it; if text doesn’t have an outline, make one
- Use section titles and paragraph headlines for major and minor outline headings
- Use outline style that works best for you (Roman numerals, Cornell, etc)

Step 3: Question Get Your Brain Involved in the Assignment

- Write a list of questions
- Write specific questions for concepts you do not understand
- Ask, how does this assignment relate to my future goals?
• Develop questions from chapter and section titles

While You Read

Step 4: Read At last!

• Notice when your attention wanders, and gently bring it back to here and now
• Avoid marathon reading sessions – schedule breaks and set reasonable goals; your ability to stay focused longer will likely increase with practice
• Set shorter goals (eg, short break every half hour) for difficult reading
• To stay focused:
  o Visualize the material
  o Read it out loud, especially if it is complicated
  o Get a feel for the subject
• REMEMBER: Holding an open book and running your eyes across the page does not mean that you are effectively reading!

Step 5: Underline Get Your Money’s Worth From Your Textbooks

• You are creating signals for reviewing, which will save you time when studying for tests
• Reading with a pen/highlighter in hand involves another sense (touch/motion) to your learning
• Don’t underline or highlight until you’ve completed a section or concept – be sure you know what is important and then mark it
• Don’t overuse it – underline/highlight less than 10 percent of the text; you are marking the most important information
• Write in the margins, write summary statements, mark passages you don’t understand – write!

Step 6: Answer Demand Answers from your Textbooks

• Write down the answers to those questions you asked
• Fill in your outline
• Write down new questions
• Use those notes to ask questions of the instructor in class or privately

After You Read

Step 7: Recite It’s OK to Talk to Yourself

• When you read an assignment, make a speech about it
• Look at each underlined point and start talking about it
• Form a group and practice teaching what you read to others
• Talk about what you read whenever you can

Step 8: Review Thanks for the Memories

• Do your first complete review within 24 hours of reading the material!
• This moves information from short-term to long-term memory
• Look over your notes and clear up anything you do not understand
• Recite some of the main points again
• Even if your recall isn’t great, you’ll pick up the material much faster the second time through
• This can be fairly brief

Step 9: Review Again     Keep Those Neural Pathways Open

• Do weekly and monthly reviews of reading assignments
• May be very short, 4-5 minutes per assignment
• Go over notes, read highlighted parts of text, recite one or two complicated points
• Use your wait time – at the dentist’s office, doing laundry, etc
• If an assignment was difficult, you may need to reread it
• Schedule review periods in advance
• Reflect on what you read – allow new ideas to take shape!

We most easily remember the first and last points made in a presentation. Previewing and reviewing your reading helps you put this to work for you!