Active Reading Study Sheet

The Goals of this Study Sheet

This sheet is intended to inform you on what active reading is, what it’s used for, and explain how to incorporate it into the next time you study or read a textbook. You’ll receive techniques on how to effectively read so that you have a more comprehensive understanding of what you read. It’s simple in theory, but practice is essential.

What is Active Reading?

Have you ever read a passage from a textbook and not remembered anything? That’s called passive reading. Conversely, active reading is the exact opposite. When we actively read, our goal is retain the information that is read. Reading actively can reduce the need to re-read text, create a deep understanding about what was read, and help us to better prepare for exams. We want to create meaning and engage with the text.

Active reading is easier said than done, so we will first go over the goals of actively reading, and then look at techniques on how to effectively do this.

Goals of Active Reading

What do we want to accomplish when we actively read? Here are some of the objectives when we read a textbook:

- Fully comprehend the ideas of the text
- Retain information after reading
- Make comparisons and connection to the knowledge in a real-world aspect

How to Actively Read

From the Writing Center
at the Academic Resource Center

John Tyler Community College
There are several different ways that you can go about reading actively. Some may work for you, some may not. It’s important to understand your own study strengths and weaknesses, and apply these to your abilities:

- **Skim the text.** While doing this, read the bold section titles and preview what you’re reading is about. After this, go back and read fully.

- **Ask questions.** This is smart to do while skimming, reading, or both. When questions are asked, it allows you to search for those answers, engaging you in the text.

- **Highlight.** Underlining works as well, but highlighting is easier to see. Highlight or underline key words, phrases, or main ideas that are important to the text. As you do this, you are actively looking for ideas to highlight, engaging yourself with the text and setting a reminder for what to study later on.

- **Annotate.** In the margins of the pages (or on your own paper) take notes. Annotations can consist of anything: questions, summaries, personal ideas/challenges, etc. This allows you to use your own words, which will help to remember information read.

- **Take breaks.** Reading for too long can make the reader disengage with the text. If you take a break when reading, you’ll come back ready to read again. This will help retain the text better.

- **Summarize.** After reading, write down a summary/main ideas that you recall from the text. This requires you to think back on what you read; if you are struggling with this, then you need to read the text again.

- **Read out loud.** When your brain hears the information, it will have received it visually and auditorily; this works especially well if you are a primarily auditory learner.

**In Conclusion**
Active reading is essential, especially in courses where mass volumes of information come straight from the text. Again, adjust these techniques to fit your study style. Active reading may seem time consuming, but the outcomes are unmatched to passive reading. With these tools at your disposal, you have the ability to understand what you’re reading with more clarity than before, and have resources to look back on when you need to study for an exam.

Sources Referenced

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