College Reading Strategies

Reading college-level texts can be a challenge.
Use this 3-step approach to help you make the most of your reading time.

Before Reading
Build the big picture and identify your purpose.

Set up a productive environment. Be aware of lighting, seating, noise, location, and time of day.

Get to know the text. Skim the abstract, table of contents, chapter introduction/summary, subheadings, visuals, key terms, and/or related lecture notes.

Chunk the chapter into manageable sections. If your focus starts to wander, take a break. Decide if how the text is divided needs to be revised.

Define a purpose for reading. State why this information is significant. Turn subheadings into questions. For example, the subheading "Establishing Controls" is in a chapter about conducting scientific experiments. You can turn that subheading into "Why is it important to establish controls in an experiment?" or "What are some of the methods/considerations for establishing controls?"

During Reading
Think about the text. Stay focused by being active.

Paraphrase the text or take notes while reading.

Answer any embedded questions to check comprehension.

Use annotations or your own symbol system to track your thinking.

Record your own thoughts and main points about the text in the margins or notes.

Examples of Annotations

❓	Murky Concept
★	Important Concept
—	Key Term
⟲	Process / Cycle
✓	Mastered Concept

After Reading
Check for understanding.

Answer subheading, book, and/or homework questions.

Outline big ideas and supporting evidence or reasoning in your own words.

Make a concept map to focus on relationships and connections.

Note example problems by writing clear explanations for each step while solving.

Combine and connect your reading notes and lecture notes.