

5 Active Reading Strategies for Textbook Assignments – College Info Geek

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(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JL0pqJeE4_w)

00:00 Thomas Frank: [Energetic] Hey, what's up! It's Thomas Frank, and in this video we're talking about Active Reading.

00:04 So, Active Reading is a method of reading a book with the [Emphasized] intent of pulling something useful out of it, and it's different from passively going over the text once just to experience it.

00:14 So right off the bat I'm going to say there are a lot of systems that have been put forward like [Transition Sound] SQ3R, SQ4R, and lots of other acronym-driven systems for active reading, and [Transition Sound] I think that these systems are too cumbersome, they take too long, and I'm not going to be going over them in this video. [Deliberate] And I'm not the only one who thinks this.

00:31 So instead what I'm going to do is show you how I'm applying Active Reading to three specific books [Sound Effect Along with Appearance of Arrow] that I've been reading recently, and how I am able to recall the information better by doing that.

00:37 But first, I am going to give you Five [Sound Effect with Appearance of Text] general Active reading tips that you can apply to any reading you have to do.

00:42 [Transition Sound] So, the first tip is to use a technique called Pseudo-Skimming...and the longer the readings you have to do are, the more likely a lot of the paragraphs in those readings are going to be filler. That could be like background...it could be extra detail...it could be asides, things like that. And...often you don't really need to read these paragraphs all that in-depth to get the information you need for your classes.

01:04 So...the Pseudo-Skimming technique [Transition Sound] is really a paragraph by paragraph [Sound Effect with Appearance of Animation] technique where you skim each paragraph very quickly, and then you sort of get a feel for the reading and figure out which paragraphs hold [Transition Sound] the most important information.

01:16 The second tip is to try to read backwards [Sound Effect with Appearance of Text]. A lot of textbooks are not all that exciting. They don't really have a narrative, and you're not going to spoil yourself if you read it backwards, or go to the end. So if you want to figure out what a certain chapter is all about, you can first go to the back: look at the summary, look at the vocab lists that are put back there...some of the questions...the review items...and get a feel for what the actual chapter wants you to learn in a big sense –in a like sky-high sense. And once you get that, you can start going backwards and seeing like “okay, yes the, uh, <stutters> this-this vocabulary word was mentioned here...this graphic mentions a topic that was in a review question” ...etcetera, etcetera.

01:54 Tip Number Three is to come up with questions while you read, so when you are going through the chapter – if you're doing Pseudo-Skimming or anything else – when something comes up that you don't really know about, then note that down as a question, and you can also use the headings – the subheadings – in a chapter as questions. So, if there's a subheading that talks about a specific concept, you can reword that as a question – maybe even write it down in your notes – and then, as you go through the actual content of that section, answer the question for yourself. And you can do this in review as well.

02:22 Tip Number Four is to Pay Attention [Sound Effect with the Appearance of Text] to the formatting of a text.

02:24 [Screen Transition Sound] Now when I was in college, I would do this with almost all of my readings. I would open up the book, I would look at almost every single bolded item or list of things, and I would pay special attention to those items in the text because they'd probably would go over processes that are important to the chapter, or go over vocab terms that are almost certainly going to appear on tests. So, pay attention to things that [Emphasis] stand out in their formatting, and, uh, note those down.

02:48 And my last tip – before I actually get into some of the books I'm reading – Is to either mark-up the book while you're reading or take notes while you're reading [Sound Effect with Appearance of Graphic]. So if you own the book, you can actually write in it with a pencil and make notes in the margins, which is really helpful, and if you don't you can use flags, or possibly highlight depending on your school's policies – and I'll show you that in a bit. Uh, if you really don't wanna mark up your book, then you can take, like, really short, bulleted notes on a piece of paper...you can also put questions in there, or you can take flow-style notes.

03:15 And, I'll actually throw some of my recent notes up on screen here: So these are notes that I took in researching textbook reading strategies for these videos – this one and the last one. And, as you can see, I took notes on the things I was reading, uh, actually for multiple books, but it ended up creating a better picture that I could come back to, and it's in my own words – it's in my own terms, so it makes for better recall.

03:37 [Screen Transition Sound] So, those are my five tips, and to round this video out, I am going to show you a few of the books I have been reading, and three different Active Reading strategies that I adopted for each book.

03:45 And, the first book is Thinking Fast and Slow by Daniel Kahneman. Now this book is about Cognitive Biases...it's about bugs in human reasoning and rationality and decision-making, and... it's a super dense book... I actually, uh, have only gotten to page a hundred and forty five – as my little nine-tails will tell you.

04:02 If you look at the spine – or not the spine here, but the side of it – I’ve used flags to mark up almost every page that I have read. So, this is one of those books that’s just packed with information on almost every single page... uh... every single chapter mentions multiple studies with lots of results, uh, it defines different terms... and I was really interested in almost everything I was reading here, so as I went through, I used flags to mark up the book in a non-damaging way. And I was reading this book about a year ago, um, I’ve become a little bit more okay with marking up my books permanently since then, but the flag method does work – especially if you’re renting textbooks, or you plan on selling it later – you can just pull ‘em out when you need to, when you have good notes for them and you finishing reviewing. Uh, but yeah, it’s a pretty good method.

04:48 So the second book here, is Confessions of a Scholarship Winner by Kristina Ellis, and I’m going through this book because it’s a [Emphasized] fantastic overview of how to win scholarships, probably gonna put it on my essential books list and create a lot of blog posts and things on it.

05:01 But, um, with this book I actually went through with a pencil, and I would bracket paragraphs that held specific ideas I wanted to review later. I would write notes in the margin, underline specific terms that are actually really important, and as I’m looking back through the book, I can see all the spots that I wanted to note for later, so I’m actually gonna go through the book a second time once I finish reading it, and take good notes on it.

05:24 And, speaking of notes, the book I’ve been reading most recently, is The Power of Habit by Charles Duhigg. And, uh, if you were to be able to look through this book, you’ll see no markings whatsoever.

05:37 So, I actually have a third Active Reading system, which is working really, really well for me at this point, um, and it’s just to take notes on the chapter after I have read it. So, I have created a habit of reading this [Speaker Chuckles] “Power of Habit” [Chuckles] [Sound Effect with Appearance of Graphic] um, I’ve created a habit of reading this book every single day for at least fifteen minutes, and I check if off in HabitRPG, and, uh, it’s something that’s becoming a very strong habit for me, so I definitely do it everyday.

06:01 And... about once every two days I finish a chapter, and immediately when I finish reading a chapter, I’ll go over to Evernote [Screen Transition Sound with Appearance of Notes Page] on my desktop computer, go back through the chapter, and write notes in Evernote – which you can see right now – on the chapter. So, I’ve actually got a good bulleted summary of almost the entire book right now. Everything that I thought was important in that book is in that summary, and it’s going to be about three thousand words once I finish it, I’m estimating. So, that’s a lot less than what’s in the book, and if I wanna go back and review what I learned, it’s gonna be much easier – and it’s in my own words as well.

06:32 [Screen Transition Sound] So those are just some of the strategies you can use for active reading. Hopefully you can implement some of these into your studies, in order to cut down on that study time and increase your recall [Sound Effect with Appearance of Graphic] and your ability to better on tests and essays and whatever it is you need to apply your readings to.

06:45 [Enthusiastic] If you wanna get more videos on being an awesome student, then just hit that subscribe button below; otherwise, I will see [emphasized] you in next week’s video.

06:51 [Techno Music Begins with Appearance of logo] [Enthusiastic] Hey! Thanks for watching my video! If you enjoyed it, then you can support me by giving it a like on YouTube, or sharing it with a friend. If you wanna get more videos just like this every single week on being a better college student, then click the subscribe button right [Emphasized] there. If this is the last vide, a clip of it is playing right below there, and you can click that to watch it. Also, you can get a summary and links to anything I mentioned in the video by going to the companion blog post which you can find by clicking on the orange logo right there. Lastly, if you wanna get a free chapter of my book when it comes out, then you can click that book and subscribe to the College Info Geek newsletter. You'll also get notified when new podcasts episodes and blog posts come out every week. Lastly, if you have ideas for new videos or just want to connect with me, you can do so on Twitter, or leave a comment on this video. [Enthusiastic] Thanks!

07:29 [Music Fades]

07:30 [Video Ends]