

Muscle Reading

Before you read: Pry Ot 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:
 - Visualize the material
 - Read it out loud, especially if it is complicated
 - 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!

Adapted from: Dave Ellis (1997). *Becoming A Master Student (8th Edition)*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.