

# Reading College Textbooks

## *Finding Focus!*

# Having trouble concentrating?

This presentation will provide tips on how to:

- Make a plan
- Set mini-goals
- Take action

# Making a Reading Plan

Preparing to read. Before you start, figure out WHAT and WHY you are reading.

You might be assigned to read:

- Information about knowledge accepted in the field
- An argument by one scholar with a particular interpretation of some data or evidence
- A primary source—story, newspaper article, painting
- A collection of data—measurements, interviews

# An Example of “What” and “Why”

Why has the professor assigned this?

- She wants me to learn the information it contains.
- She wants me to use the abstract ideas it presents.
- He wants me to get a different argument from another reading in the course.
- He wants me to have some general background information.

# Setting Some Reading “Mini-Goals”

Read the first and last paragraphs of an article

Read all the sub-headings and make a chart of how they relate to each other

Read until you notice your mind wandering, and make a mark on the page. Then chart out the marks—do they relate to a particular idea or type of data?

Break the reading into pieces and do one at a time. Take breaks.

# Take Action When Reading!

Go beyond highlighting—write questions in the margins, note things you'd like to ask about in class. Mark:

- Important information
- Important ideas
- Questions to ask in class
- Places you got lost
- Connections to things we have learned so far in class

Take reading notes!

- Include your own ideas and questions on each main idea or important piece of information.
- In *A Writer's Reference*, you can find more examples of how to read actively and annotate your text. See section A1, "writing about texts."

# Get Sleepy When Reading?

- You might really be tired. Go to bed early and read when you are rested.
- Read with a pen in your hand, a notebook nearby, and good light.
- Reward yourself for reaching reading mini-goals.

# “I understand it when I read it, but...”

1. When you finish reading, take a step back and get perspective.
2. Make a concept map of the material.
3. Write a brief summary of the material at the beginning of your class notes.
4. Briefly note one important idea you got from the reading and one thing that you are confused about.



# “I learn better by seeing or doing.”

- Translate your reading into another mode. Draw a picture, make a chart, or imagine one piece of information in each room of your childhood home.
- Practice moving back and forth from pictures to words, or from words to numbers, or from things to symbols. This will make you more familiar with the material. It’s like cross training for your mind.

# “I’ve gotten so far behind...”

Afraid you’ll never catch up?

- It is easy to feel overwhelmed. If it seems difficult to even open up your books, you might try a stress management technique.
- Get out your syllabus and make a plan.
- Divide the course into units.
- Which reading is most important for each?
- Begin with those.
- Write “reading time” on your calendar each day, just as you would note your work hours or a dentist appointment. Keep your appointments with yourself.

# Student Success Centers

For more information on being a successful college student contact the Student Success Center.

119 Payson Smith Hall, Portland  
780-4040

119 Bailey Hall, Gorham  
780-5652

119 Lewiston-Auburn College, Lewiston  
753-6500

or e-mail: [studentsuccess@usm.maine.edu](mailto:studentsuccess@usm.maine.edu)

Student Success Advisors are available to help you.