

Read Your Textbook More Efficiently with PRR

PREVIEW, READ, RECALL (PRR) might look time consuming at first glance, but you will be surprised at how your memory and understanding improves using these three simple steps. Give it a try!

1. Preview. If you have a general idea of what the text is about, you will be able to link your knowledge to other information that will help you to remember, understand, and express the material that you read.

- Before you read, spend 2 seconds (per page) to look over the text.
- Look at the title, introduction, subheadings, first sentences of each paragraph to get the main ideas. Be sure to include any diagrams, charts, figures, conclusions or summaries, and quiz questions in your preview.
- Afterwards, answer the following questions:
 - What is this section about?
 - How is it organized?
 - How difficult is it to read?
 - How long will it take to read?

Most people read at about 250 words per minute. How many words are there on a page in your textbook?
Time yourself reading for one minute. How many words did you read? At that pace, you can estimate how long each page or section should take, and plan accordingly.

2. Read Actively. Involve yourself in the text. Working on understanding the material will combat boredom and will increase retention.

- Set realistic goals for time and number of pages to be read.
- Divide your chapter into small (i.e. 1/2 page or single column) sections, rather than trying to read the whole chapter non-stop.
- Ask yourself a question before each paragraph or section, then seek its answer. This technique will give you a definite purpose for your reading. Try inverting the sub-heading or first sentence into question form, using "who," "what," "when," "why," or "how" if necessary.
- Take breaks when you feel unable to stay with the material due to daydreaming, drowsiness, boredom, hunger, etc. After a short break, you can return to your reading with more energy and alertness.

3. Recall. 40 - 50% of the material we read is forgotten very shortly (about 15 minutes after we read it). Immediate recall is an essential first step toward continued retention of the material.

After reading each small section of material, use one (or more) of the following methods:

- Recall mentally or recite orally the highlights of what you have read.
- Ask yourself questions (maybe the same ones you used before you read the section) and answer them in your own words.
- Underline and make marginal notes of the key words or phrases in the section. You should be able to make a sentence or phrase from the underlined words that reflects the main idea for each paragraph. Underlining after you read is the best way to decide what the most important information to remember is.
 - Try to stick to underlining the main points. Underlining (or highlighting) everything will make it difficult to find the important ideas in your notes later on.
- Make separate notes, outlines, or flashcards of what you have read, which you need to put into your own words. Paraphrasing important material ensures that you actually understand what you have read and can apply it with your own thoughts.
- Recall with a friend. What you don't recall, they might.

*Adapted from the UT Learning Centre at the University of Texas at Austin.