



The CENTER for STUDENT SUCCESS

READING STRATEGIES

Each of your classes at Southern includes a significant reading component as part of your grade. This guide provides tips to help you read with **efficiency** and **comprehension**. To read this way requires work **before, during, and after** the actual reading.

Before you read:

- **Pre-read** each book and chapter before you begin. Utilizing the following strategies will help your brain to create “hooks” for the information you are reading:
 - Study the **table of contents** to understand the outline and flow of the book you are about to read.
 - Preview each **chapter** quickly before you start by scanning the **sub-headings** within the chapter.
 - Scan the **final paragraphs** of each chapter to identify the author’s concluding statements and key terms.
 - Consider **questions** you have before reading each chapter. Based on your pre-reading, what questions do you expect the author to answer in the chapter you are about to read?
- Break up your reading assignments into **manageable chunks**. Divide the number of chapters by the number of days/weeks you have to complete the reading. This will help you to stay on track and avoid reading the entire book in one or two days.
- Find a **quiet, distraction-free environment**. Put away your phone and avoid texting or scrolling through social media while reading.
- NOTE: the amount of time you spend on each book will vary depending on how much you need to retain from that book. Always know what you will need from a book *before* you read it (e.g. formal book review, reading quizzes, completion mark, etc.).

While you read:

- Always be on the lookout for the author’s thesis, conclusions, and questions within each book/chapter.
- Use a **pen/pencil** to scan the page as your eyes follow along. This will increase speed along with focus.
- If you find yourself losing concentration, try **reading aloud** to regain focus.
- Develop your own system of **marginalia** (marginal notes) to mark information as you read. Do not be afraid to write in your own book!
 - Do not over-do it—if you underline *everything*, you will not be able to find *anything*.
 - Mark and define any unfamiliar terms.
 - Come up with shorthand ways to identify common features; e.g. supporting points (1, 2, 3...), definitions (box), questions (?), surprising statements (!).
- Avoid re-reading. Reading a passage over and over is an inefficient use of time. Be purposeful to concentrate deeply in order to comprehend information the first time through.

After you read:

- Write **summary notes/questions** at the end of each chapter. What were the key points/conclusions? This will help you to synthesize everything you learned from the chapter. This requires only 30-60 seconds but will save significant time when writing a book review.

NOTE: This guide draws some strategies from *How to Become a Straight-A Student* by Cal Newport, *The A Game* by Kenneth Sufka, and *How To Read a Book* by Mortimer Adler.