Strategies for Effective Reading

**APPROACH READING EFFECTIVELY**

- Choose a location that is peaceful, secluded and well-lit where you are not disturbed.
- Divide your work into stages or chunks.
- Be specific about what you want to accomplish. (e.g. —read chapter 8, complete exercise D. Not “study biology.” That’s too broad!)
- Take a short break each hour to keep your concentration at its best.
- Focus your attention and concentration. Read for shorter periods of time, if that helps.

**STRATEGIES TO INCREASE YOUR SPEED**

- During the first read through, try to grasp overall concepts rather than understanding all the details.
- Don't get hung up on single words, but DO look up key words that you must understand to grasp the entire concept

**SKIMMING**

- What is skimming?
  - Rapid reading
  - Extracting the gist of the material without reading every word
  - Skipping non-essential or less-essential material

- When should I skim read?
  - To make use of my background knowledge
  - To get the general idea of the article/chapter
  - To discern main points and significant detail
  - To set work/reading priorities

What do I look for when I skim?
SQ4R METHOD FOR ACADEMIC LITERATURE

- **SURVEY (from BIG to small)**
  - Leaf through book to get acquainted with the organization and style
  - Read preface, table of contents
  - Check for appendices, types of indices that can be useful
  - Consider the chapter titles
  - Look at all illustrations, diagrams, graphs
  - Quickly read the introduction, summary and review questions
  - Glance at all key words, bolded text, questions for consideration

- **QUESTION**
  - While surveying, always read with a question in mind. This makes reading more active, which helps concentration and retention
  - You’ll also find it’s easier to identify key concepts AND you will therefore end up with fewer notes to review
  - Turn all subheadings into questions. Read actively asking why, when, who, etc.
  - Concentrate on relationships based on concepts introduced earlier.

- **READ & RECORD**
  - Next, read section-by-section, actively seeking the answer to the questions you’ve posed.
  - Once you’ve found the answer, highlight or underline it in the textbook and write the key word or an abbreviated question in the margin.
  - While you read, make notes! Point-form, in your words, at the end of each section.
  - Although it may, at first, seem more time-consuming than simply reading the text, you are reading, making notes, AND studying for exams in a single process.

- **RECITE**
  - Before you go on to read the next section answer (out loud is best) the ‘question’ that you’ve written in the margin.
  - If you can’t answer it, read the text again, cover it up, and try to answer the ‘question’ once more.
  - Only read the next section when you can successfully answer the ‘question(s)’ that you’ve posed.

- **REVIEW**
  - At the end of your study session, don’t just close up your book and forget what you’ve done.
  - Take a 5 minute break and then go back to the material that you started reading at the beginning and then take 5-10 minutes to repeat the process outlined under ‘recite’.

References:
Learning Strategies, Student Academic Success Services, Queen’s University, Kingston, ON
http://sass.queensu.ca/learningstrategies