

PRR: Preview, Read, Recall

A strategic approach to your reading

Preview

Before you tackle the reading, get a general framework of main ideas to better comprehend and retain details you'll encounter later. Spend about 10 minutes familiarizing yourself with the text as a whole.

Check out the following elements:

- Title
- Author's Biographical Info.
- Publication Information
- Table of Contents
- Introduction or Preface
- Index
- Glossary

Preview individual chapters, looking for the following:

- Introduction
- Subheadings
- First sentence of each section
- Diagrams, charts, etc.
- Conclusion

Make some concrete projections:

- What's the main idea?
- How is the text organized?
- How difficult is it?
- How long will it take to read?



Read

Being an active reader helps you understand the material, combats boredom, and increases retention.

- Set realistic goals for how long, and how many pages, you'll be able to read.
- Don't try to read the entire chapter non-stop. Instead, divide it into small sections—such as a half-page, or a column-- and read them individually.
- Ask yourself a question before each paragraph or section, then try to answer it as you read.
- Take short breaks when you find your mind wandering.



Recall

Research shows that we forget about 40-50% of what we read within about 15 minutes unless we take measures to recall it immediately.

- Recall mentally or recite orally the highlights of what you've read.
- Ask yourself questions as you read and answer them in your own words. These questions can be the same as those you asked before each section.
- Underline key words or phrases in each section, and write notes in your margins. Both will help you decide what you need to remember.
- See if you can recast the material as a story or narrative; then imagine yourself retelling or explaining it to a friend.

Getting started: preview your next reading assignment

1. Who is the author? What might the author's biographical information tell you about the book?
2. When was the book published? Is the information current, or are you aware of new information that might affect the subject matter? Have you heard of the publishing house?
3. Once you've read the Table of Contents, does it make sense to read the chapters in order? Or would it be more effective to read later chapters first?
4. The Introduction or Preface should contain a thesis or statement of the book's purpose. Rewrite this information in your own words.
5. The Conclusion should summarize the book. What are the main themes? Write them in your own words.
6. What do you hope or intend to learn from this book? The previewing you've done so far should give you a good idea of what you'll accomplish or what you'll know once you've read the book.
7. Preview individual chapters, much as you have previewed the book as a whole. Ask yourself what each chapter contributes to the organization of the book. Make an active prediction about each chapter's importance and how much time you will dedicate to it.

Now read and recall ...