2.1: Read Effectively

![Image](https://human.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Composition/Book%3A_The_Word_on_College_Reading_and_Writing_(Babin_et_al...)

Good writing begins with good reading. Every time you read, you’re exposed to someone else’s ideas and to their way of writing: their word choice, vocabulary, knowledge base, use of language, and so forth.

How do you become a reader, or a better reader?

**First**, read every day. And vary the materials you read: a book, a magazine article, an online blog, etc. Try readings things that are a little challenging. In other words, don’t just vary the subject matter—vary the difficulty, too. Stretch!
Second, learn and practice the skills of effective reading (which are explained below in this section).

Third, keep reading. Every day. And use good effective reading skills.

Fourth, learn and practice the skill of reading critically. To learn more, see Reading Critically in the “Writing about Texts” section.

Fifth, keep reading. Yes, every day, putting your skills to work. (Practice makes perfect!)

Sixth, well, you know.

Reading effectively means reading in a way that helps you understand, evaluate, and reflect on a written text. As you might guess, these skills are very important to college students, no matter what field you’re going into: you’ll be doing a lot of reading. The more effectively you read, the easier it’ll be, the less time it will take, and the more you’ll enjoy the experience.

People who read effectively use a variety of skills and techniques:

- They start by creating an optimal setting for reading. They pick the best time, place, and conditions.
- They engage in pre-reading strategies before starting to read (see pre-reading strategies later in this section)
- They read material efficiently: they pick up a piece of material, engage actively with it, and finish.
- They create a reading environment that helps decrease distraction.
- They annotate written texts (in other words, they write directly on the texts) or take notes as they read. By doing this, they enter into a discussion with the text, interacting with it.
- They research or investigate content they don’t fully understand.
- They work to discover the central meaning of the piece. They ask themselves
  - What is the author’s point?
  - What is the text trying to say?
  - What story is the author telling?
  - How does the author create and build this meaning?
- They reflect on what the text means to them, internalizing the meaning:
  - How am I responding to this text?
  - Why am I responding that way?
  - What does the text make me think about?
  - What does this information mean to me?