



## Cornell University Learning Strategies Center

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### Three P's for Effective Reading

The 3 P's allow students to engage with their reading, learn actively, and study more efficiently.

#### 1. Determine the **Purpose** of the assignment:

- Review the syllabus and ask yourself, why did the professor assign these pages?
- What is the “big picture” of the reading and how does it fit into the context of the course?
- Is this information going to be used for an exam? If so, what type (i.e. essay questions, short answer, multiple choice)?
- Will this reading be discussed in class? Is participation a percentage of the grade?
- Will a paper about this topic be assigned? If so, how does the assignment require you to use the reading?

#### 2. **Preview** the assignment with your Purpose in mind before you actually read it:

- Read the chapter titles and headings. Don't just skim over them, but have a discussion in your head about the meaning of the words and how they relate to your prior knowledge, especially from class. When you begin reading (step 4), this step will help the new information stick in your long-term memory.
- Look at graphs, images, charts, and figures, and notice what seems familiar (perhaps from lecture) and what is brand-new to you.
- For textbooks, look at how the book is laid out—chapter highlights, concept reviews, charts, graphs, and links. Learn what resources the book offers so you can access them in the future.
- For other types of readings, look at the Table of Contents. If there is an introduction, epilogue, or “about the author” section, read it – it can provide insight into the author's perspective and shed light on why your professor assigned the reading.

#### 3. Make a **Plan** for how you will use the information from this reading—what do you need?

- Notes to study for an exam?
  - Use chapter headings to
    1. Set up an outline on a separate paper, document, or note cards that you can fill in as you read
    2. Test yourself later
- Quotes to highlight and use for a paper?
  - Selectively use a highlighter, or underline passages
- Passages to analyze and discuss in class?
  - Write concise comments in the margins
- Start your reading with your plan in place.

#### 4. Now you are ready to begin reading!