

Online Reading Tips

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WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about how to optimize your reading process when reading academic texts online. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Approaches to Reading on a Screen

1a. Eliminate Online Distractions

1b. Set a Time Limit

1c. Identify Why You Are Reading

1d. Preview Before You Read

1e. Take Notes

1f. Read Difficult Material Out Loud

1. Approaches to Reading on a Screen

Even if you take primarily face-to-face classes in college, you'll likely find that a significant amount of the reading you'll have to do comes from online sources: articles on the web, online library databases, and e-books.

The academic reading process of previewing, active reading, summarizing, and reviewing can be used to read these online materials, just like any other text. However, effective online reading takes time and practice, and you need to carefully consider your approach.

Read on for a list of tips that can help you successfully complete your online reading.

1a. Eliminate Online Distractions

In addition to the usual distractions found in a space, like people, cell phones, and televisions, online readers can be easily distracted by computer features, such as games, instant messaging, and social media sites.

Shut these programs off, and make sure your environment stays focused. You can even download tools to block programs that might cause distractions for a set period of time to help you maintain your willpower.

1b. Set a Time Limit

Reading from a computer screen can cause eye strain, so plan to read for shorter periods of time.

➞ **EXAMPLE** Read for about 30 minutes and then take a 10 minute break away from your monitor. Use the time in between reading sessions to think about what you just read and identify the key points or themes.

1c. Identify Why You Are Reading

Perhaps you are looking for sources of information for an assignment or paper. Maybe you need some background information on a topic. Or maybe you need to learn about a specific subject matter for a course. Knowing why you are reading will help you decide exactly what strategies you should use.

If you are clear on your purpose but do not have a study guide or assignment to guide your reading, you may find it helpful to generate some personal study questions to focus your efforts.

➞ **EXAMPLE** If you were studying interpersonal communication in the criminal justice field, you could ask, "What are the most important interpersonal communication skills? Why are they important? How can these skills be developed?"

Record these questions in your notes and refer to them as you read.

1d. Preview Before You Read

Previewing the title, headings, and subheadings of a document will give you a better sense of its content and organization, as well as make you aware of what you already know about the topic.

You can then make an informed choice about:

- Whether or not the material suits your purpose
- Which sections of the material you should read
- How thoroughly you should read to accomplish your purpose

1e. Take Notes

Whether you choose to use paper or a computer program, it is important to record important ideas for future reference. Have a pen and paper readily available, or open a blank Word document so that you are prepared to take notes once you start reading.

Note-taking helps you understand ideas and ensure you have the material for later reference. Be sure to record ideas in point form and in your own words, and experiment with different note-taking strategies to find one that best suits your needs.



After evaluating the document you plan to read, save it to your personal files. This allows you to highlight key ideas or make summary notes in the margins of the document itself. These markings can then be

transferred into your own notes later.

If you feel you might need the information for an assignment, record the document's reference information next to the notes you created. Reference information typically includes a source's author, title, publisher, and year and place of publication. This step is important since you must cite all the references you draw on for assignments and papers. It's easier to do this step now rather than later when you may have forgotten the website address.

1f. Read Difficult Material Out Loud

Sometimes it's helpful to hear what you are reading, especially if the material is complex or difficult to understand.

Study in a space where you can read aloud to yourself. Alternatively, you can ask a friend, family member, or classmate to review complex material with you.

When two people look at information together, they can usually make sense of difficult material.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that online reading is something you will likely encounter in your academic career. While online reading material is subject to the same academic reading process as other texts, there are several **approaches to reading on a screen** that can make this kind of reading easier.

These approaches include **eliminating distractions** so that you can maintain focus, **setting a time limit** so that you don't become overly exhausted, **identifying why you are reading** so that you approach the text with purpose, **previewing before you read** so that you have an idea of what will be covered in the text, **taking notes** so that you can capture the important ideas in the text, and **reading difficult material out loud** so that you can gain a better understanding of more complex ideas.

Best of luck in your learning!

Source: This content has been adapted from Lumen Learning's "Online Reading Tips" tutorial.