

The Role of Reading in Higher Education

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WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about the importance of reading in higher education. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. The Role of Texts in Higher Education

It's safe to say that, no matter what course of study you pursue, reading is going to be a significant part of your higher education experience. In general, all of your classes will have some form of assigned reading, and in many classes, doing the reading will be your primary task throughout the term.

A course text can come in many forms:

- Textbook
- Scholarly book
- Work of fiction
- Article
- Case study
- Essay

Anything you are assigned to read is a course text. Course texts can serve as the basis for quizzes, exams, and written assignments. You may also be tasked with conducting research and having to locate and utilize texts beyond the assigned readings.

2. The Quantity of Reading in Higher Education

The workload and time commitment required for classes at the college or university level can be quite a step up from what you experienced in high school.

This difference might be most pronounced in the amount of reading you are assigned in higher education. It will vary by subject, course, and instructor, but you can expect in more reading-intensive subjects to be assigned around 100-200 pages a week.

It is understandable to feel a little bit overwhelmed about adjusting to the workload, but having a plan involving methods and strategies for reading effectively and efficiently will help! Simply doing the reading is

3. Managing Your Reading Time

Recall that effective time management starts with knowing what your tasks are and estimating how long it will take you to do them so that you can coordinate your schedule and calendar.

The same strategies that apply to working on assignments like papers, presentations, and exams can be used to manage your reading assignments. While it's true that some students, for various reasons, read more slowly than others, there are ways to maximize your reading efficiency and get the most out of your reading time.

In addition to the reading preparation outlined in the next section, you can also work to improve your attention span.

4. Managing and Improving Your Attention Span

There are a number of things you can do to minimize distractions, keep your mind from wandering, and stay focused when you sit down to read.

Being mindful of how your energy level and your sleeping and eating habits can influence your attention span is a good place to start. Schedule your reading time for when you will be sufficiently rested and not thrown off by nagging hunger.

Again, choosing the right environment for your reading is going to help a lot as well—for instance, a café with music and lots of conversation works for some people, but for others, it can be very distracting. It is a big help to simply take note of the things that tend to distract you so that you can avoid them in the future.

If you can tell your concentration is flagging, you might try taking a break, stretching, or shifting the position you are sitting in. As always, the key is cultivating the awareness that helps you identify methods that are right for you.

➞ **EXAMPLE** You sit down to read for your history class, but you can't stop thinking about the finance test you just took. You're worried about how you did and it's really affecting your ability to focus. What can you do?

One strategy for improving your attention span is to schedule “worry time.” This means taking stock of all the thoughts and concerns that invade your headspace when you are trying to work on something else, and literally scheduling time to worry about them. If you know that from 4:00 to 4:30 you have nothing else to do but worry about that grade on the finance test, there's no use in worrying about it now. Back to that reading assignment for history!



SUMMARY

Course **texts play a large role in higher education**. You should expect to read a higher **quantity of reading in your higher education** courses. It's also important to focus on the recommended means of **managing your reading time** and **managing and improving your attention span**.

