

How to Read Academic Material (and Set Yourself Up for a Great Recitation Section)

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- **Pre-reading questions:**

- What is the topic?
- What do I already know about this topic?
- How does this topic connect to other topics I'm interested in?
- How does this reading fit with other things we are doing in the course?

- **Key terms:**

- How does the author define key terms?
- Why do I agree or disagree with the author's definitions?

- **Main idea/thesis:**

- Bracket, star, or otherwise mark it in the text.
- Why do I agree or disagree with the author's thesis?

- **Important passages:**

- Instead of highlighting, write your thoughts on key points, summarize arguments, or note why the passage is significant so it's easy to find later.
- How does this point help support the author's argument, if at all?
- Why do I agree or disagree with this point?
- What additional questions does this point raise?

- **Questions while reading:**

- Write down every question that pops in your head, no matter how small it may seem. These could be about the argument, a certain detail, something you are curious about, or a thought that is barely even related to the text.
- Keep thinking about these questions and bring them to recitation!
- This is one of the easiest ways to generate ideas for your papers.

- **Post-reading review:**

- In less than a paragraph, summarize the reading in your own words. For example:
 - * “[Author's name] argues that... They defend this argument by... This reading therefore helps explain... Questions they leave unanswered are...”
 - * Re-read these short summaries before recitation and use them to save time when studying for exams!
- Create outlines, flow charts, or mind maps to display the argument visually.