Improving Reading Comprehension

Before Reading

Build a Foundation
Sometimes the best introduction to a new subject is a shorter, simpler presentation. Begin with an alternative text, such as an encyclopedia entry or critic’s review.

Preview
Flip through the entire assignment before beginning. For textbooks, begin with the chapter summary. Read the chapter review. As when studying a map, look for key landmarks along your journey.

Generate Questions
Take time to wonder before you begin. Then seek answers to specific questions as you read, particularly those that start with “What…?” and “Why…?”

During Reading

Develop Vocabulary
Use dictionaries and glossaries. Learn word roots. Decode meaning through context. Add new vocabulary to a personal dictionary; review these new terms often and incorporate them into your everyday communication.

Stop to Summarize
Make a habit of condensing and re-stating key points and passages in your own words. This can be done aloud or in writing. Use section breaks and the ends of pages as your cues to stop.

List and Answer Questions
Anything unclear? Make a note and be sure to follow-up later with another resource, your professor or a peer.

After Reading

Create Concept Maps
Generate a simple, visual framework that differentiates main ideas, supporting details, and examples, shows relationships, or clarifies hierarchy or order.

Write a Summary
Same idea as above. Capture the gist of what you read in a simple outline, or in a few paragraphs.

Take a Quiz
If your text book has quizzes or review questions at the end of chapters, complete them! This is a great way to assess how well you retained the chapter content.

Collaborate
Meet with a classmate to discuss highlights, compare notes, address points of confusion, brainstorm test questions, and stay motivated.

For further reading
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