

Tips for independent reading study

Reading can be one of life's most pleasurable experiences. Hopefully you read often and from a wide variety of sources, from social media, to articles, to novels. There is a difference, however, between reading for personal enjoyment and reading as part of an independent study, though both should be an enjoyable experience.

Both types of reading build your skills so that you can read for meaning and deeper understanding. When you are reading as part of an independent study, it is likely that you will be asked to apply and demonstrate what you have learned in an assessment or an evaluation during the course.

Here are some strategies that will help you achieve success in an independent reading assignment.

Reading strategies

Practice the following strategies as you read:

- **Ask yourself questions.** For example, ask yourself, "What does the writer mean by ...?" or "What do I need to know more about to understand ...?"
- **Adjust your pace.** If you find the text challenging, take more time to process meaning. You may need to reread or pause to think and review.
- **Read between the lines.** Link ideas and draw conclusions. Consider what is implied, or suggested, as well as what is clearly written on the page.
- **Visualize.** Develop a mental image as you read. Some people describe reading a novel as "a movie running through their minds."

- **Make predictions.** As you read, think about what might happen next.
- **Take notes.** Jotting down main ideas and questions can help you remember key information and track your own thinking as you read. In addition, consider looking up the meaning of difficult words and creating a vocabulary list. You can also add notes to the margins of what you are reading (called annotating) to help you guide your reading and deepen your understanding. Consult this [annotation guide](#) for examples of types of annotation and consider using digital annotation tools such as:

- [Bounce](#)
- [Owl Eyes](#)
- The comment feature in various digital tools (for example [Google docs](#) and [Microsoft Office suite](#))

- **Make connections.** Make connections between what you are reading and your own knowledge and experiences. How does the text relate to other things you have learned, seen, heard about, or done? This is sometimes called "mental Velcro," because you are attaching new information to ideas you already have.

Scheduling strategies

Use a calendar (digital or paper-based) to block off time for your independent reading study to make sure it happens. Choose a reading environment that will keep you motivated and focused. Is there enough lighting? Is it comfortable and accessible? Is the space free from distraction?