



Hi graduate friends,

There are certain skills and habits associated with a good reading experience. You've got a lot of reading to do and optimizing your reading habits is an ongoing learning journey that involves trial and error and change over time. Research carried out by Wohl and Fine (2017) on graduate students at different levels and in different disciplines shows us the following areas to consider when optimizing your reading habits.

Skimming: There is so much to read and so little time. Graduate students soon learn that not everything can be read in-depth. What your purpose is and the information you're looking for determine what you will read in depth, and the rest you may end up just skimming. E.g., if you're looking to see how a specific data gathering tool is used, you may only read the methodology section of an article carefully, and if you got what you wanted, skim or even at times skip the rest. Your goal for reading will constantly change so you continuously need to align your reading with it.

Note-taking: The purpose of your reading will also shape your note-taking. What is it you want to do with this information later on? A key question that can help you determine the quality of your notes is: "When the time comes, can I easily find and use what I need?" E.g., students may prefer reflective handwritten notes when reading for class discussions and later on move to digital notes during their thesis/dissertation writing stages to be able to instantly search their notes when needed.



Setting: You want to read and generally work/study when you're the most alert. This will be different based on your lifestyle and preferences. E.g., a student may read from 5-7 am before their children wake up or another student may start working whenever in the day their ADHD medication kicks in. Your surroundings are also crucial. You may read best when it's quiet and you are alone. Or you may be motivated at a library with others around you, with white noise playing in your ears, or at a café. Distraction management is also critical, e.g., using app/website blockers, putting phone on silent, telling friends and family you are not available to chat at particular times in the day, or other similar methods. And finally, taking breaks is a must, but when to do so is a strategy. Some students take breaks when they realize their attention lowering, some after a certain amount of time (e.g., 1 hour), and some after finishing a particular amount of work (e.g., 1 article). If you can't determine what works for you, try writing a piece about what you read in different settings to test your understanding and see if it helps with making your decision.



By the way, life will certainly get in the way so don't expect to design a perfect reading experience. But obviously the more optimization you can do, the better.

Best,



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Reference:

Wohl, H., & Fine, G. A. (2017). Reading rites: Teaching textwork in graduate education. *The American Sociologist*, 48(2), 215-232.

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