Tips for independent reading study

Reading can be fun. You probably read often and from a wide variety of sources, including social media, articles, and websites. There is a difference, however, between reading for fun and reading as part of an independent study—though both should be enjoyable experiences!

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

Here are some strategies that will help you achieve success while reading. You can use these strategies while reading your novel and even as you read through the course material.

Reading strategies

- **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 think about meaning. You may need to reread or pause to think and review.

- **Read "between the lines".** Think about what is implied, or suggested, as well as what is clearly written on the page.

- **Visualize.** Make a mental picture 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 take note of key information and track your own thinking as you read. You will need these notes for some of your assignments.

  - Search for the meaning of new words and create a vocabulary list.

  - Some words may have similar sounds and spellings (homophones and homonyms). Use a dictionary to verify the meaning of words that you are not sure about.

  - Use a thesaurus to help you to better understand new words by finding similar words (similes) and opposite words (antonyms).

  - 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 the annotation guide on the next page for examples of types of annotation and consider using digital annotation tools such as 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, come across, or done?

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?

Making Annotations: A User's Guide

As you work with your text, consider all of the ways that you can connect with what you are reading.

If you own the book, you can write in the margins. If it is a borrowed book, be sure to use a pencil and erase afterwards, or use sticky notes you can write on. You can even colour-coordinate if you like!

Here are some suggestions that will help you know when to make annotations:

- Define words or slang; make the words real with examples from your experiences; think about why the author would have used a particular word or phrase.

- Make connections to other parts of the book. Note the page where you see something that reminds you of something else in the book.

- Make connections to other things you have come across, including:

  – Movies

  – Comic books/graphic novels

  – News events

  – Other books, stories, plays, songs, or poems

- Draw a picture.

- If you find a particularly difficult passage or moment, try to rewrite it in your own words.

- Make connections to your own life experiences.

- Describe a new perspective you may now have.

- Find out about the historical context or traditions that are mentioned in the passage.

- Try to analyse or interpret what is happening in the text.

- Notice any literary techniques that the author is using.