Study Aids:

- Writing
- Reading
- Study Guides & Strategies

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How to Pillage a Journal Article

Adapted from How To Read University Texts, Counselling Services, University of Victoria © 2003
http://www.coun.uvic.ca/learn/program/hndouts/readtxt.html

[If reading a book, choose a section preferably not longer than 25 or 30 pages – perhaps one chapter, or a section of a chapter – that can be read at one sitting.]

Step 1. Read the title, the introduction, and the conclusion (5 minutes).

Step 2. Read the title, the introduction again, all sub-headings, and the conclusion, again. (5-10 minutes).

Step 3. Read the title, the introduction one more time, sub-headings, the Topic Sentence of each paragraph – usually the first or second sentence, (you may read the last sentence as well, if you have time), any italicized or boldfaced words, lists (you can skim these), and the conclusion (10 minutes).

(Force yourself to do steps 1 to 3 in less than 25 minutes.)


Step 5. Make a "map" (a list, outline, or summary paragraph with some attention to the relationship of parts) of all you can remember in the chapter. Do not stop until at least half an hour is up, even if you feel that you can't possibly remember any more--more will surface if you give yourself the time. DO NOT REFER TO THE TEXT WHILE YOU ARE DOING THIS. If you come to a dead end, try alternative memory techniques to the ones you have been using: associating ideas, either from within the section itself or from other related material; visualizing pages, pictures, graphs etc.; recalling personal associations that may have come to mind; staring out the window and blanking out your thoughts;
and so on. This is strenuous, but it is rewarding. It will show you exactly how much you have learned of what you have read. You should also be noting down questions about things you have forgotten, so you can look them up.

When you are finished, you try to figure out how all the material you have remembered fits together – not necessarily as it is presented in the book, but as it is organized in your own thinking. Note down your opinions of it, questions about it, disagreements with it, and so on.

Step 6. Check through the text and fill in any important information that you missed. Use a different color of ink or some other way to mark the forgotten material, so you can study it later.

If it is a very difficult or important article, you may want to read through the entire chapter as you normally would, to make sure you did not miss anything. Then do another summary, from memory, to check whether you have learned the new material.