

Critical Reading



General Reading Tips

- Prepare to read before you begin: eliminate distractions, gather paper, blank flash cards, pens, etc.
- Skim the entire chapter or section to get a broad context for the specific information you encounter in the reading
- Read actively! This means having a pencil, pen, or highlighter in hand
- Don't read too much in one sitting - take breaks!
- Mark main points, helpful examples, and critical definitions: underline, highlight, write in margins, etc.
- Take notes: summarize all main ideas on a separate piece of paper
- Review your marked text at regular intervals
- Re-read the text when you are confused, and have faith in the power of second and third readings to help you understand more
- Look up words you don't know
- Mark well chosen quotes, statistics, examples, etc. that will support your statements in a classroom conversation, in a paper, or in an essay question on an exam

Recognizing Main Ideas

- They are often generalized statements
- They often appear at the beginning of a section, passage, or paragraph
- They often appear again in the conclusion
- They often state or imply the author's conclusions/opinions
- They are supported by examples, definitions, etc.

Recognizing Supporting Material in Nonfiction

- Often takes the form of specific examples, case studies, anecdotes, descriptions, explanations, comparisons, analogies, statistics, or quotes from experts in the field
- Usually leads up to or follows a generalized statement
- Seems to have the purpose of developing, solidifying, clarifying, or proving a conclusion, concept, theme, or opinion