Chances are you are facing a much larger, more challenging reading load than in high school. To manage all of your reading you need to first assess how much time you need to complete your reading, and then how much time you actually have to do the reading. The following strategy will help you retain more information from your readings and help to speed the process:

**Step One:** *Situate the reading in the context of the course*

You will be able to approach the reading in a more informed way if you understand how it fits with the goals of the course and if you have a clear sense of why you are doing the reading in the first place. Ask yourself:

- Why did the instructor want us to read this?
- What did the professor say about the reading in class or on the syllabus?
- How does this reading fit with other material in the course?

**Step Two:** *Look at the material but don’t read it, yet*

Getting a general level of familiarity with a text before you read it can help you start to set the stage for your reading. Doing so can also answer a lot of the questions you might be asking yourself as you read. Without those distracting questions you can focus your reading with more intensity. Examine the text for these characteristics:

- What’s the title? Who is the author? What information is on the back of the book? When was it published?
- How long is the reading? What is the structure of the reading? How many sections or chapters are there? how long are they? What are the chapter or section titles and subtitles? Are there illustrations or diagrams you should pay attention to?

**Step Three:** *Pre-read the text*

Pre-reading allows you to get an even stronger sense of the text you are about to read. It will give you a sampling of the reading you’re about to do, thus allowing you to read and understand more efficiently. To pre-read do the following:

- Read the introductory paragraph.
- Read the first sentence of every paragraph afterward.
- Read the concluding paragraph.
- Write some notes predicting what the reading will contain and note potential sections of interest.
**Step Four: Read the material**

You should find that you are able to read much more quickly knowing why you are reading the text, the basic structure of the reading, and the main ideas. Don’t spend much time writing at this stage—focus on understanding the concepts instead of writing them all down. Stopping and starting the reading process to take detailed notes at this point can slow you down and lessen your comprehensive understanding of the reading. Try drawing a vertical line in the margin alongside any section that seems especially important instead of taking notes on the information. You can always go back to it later.

**Step Five: Write about the material**

At the end of the reading or at the end of a long section, close the text and write a few paragraphs detailing your understanding of the reading—describe your ideas, discuss main concepts, and include key terms and definitions. If you need specific details from the reading, now is the time to go back to those marked passages and take more detailed notes about them. You may find, having read the entire piece, you won’t need to take as many notes as you thought. Taking notes after reading can help you make more informed decisions about what is important enough to write down and what isn’t.

**Short on Time?**

If you do not have enough time to do a detailed reading of the material, then set a time limit (with five minutes reserved for writing) and do at least four of the steps from above:

- Step One
- Step Three
- Step Four, but just skim the material with relative disregard for details.
- Step Five, but just write one paragraph covering the main concepts.