

4-2: Active Reading

So in this video, we'll going to be talking active reading. Active reading is a strategy in order to get more out of what you reading. It goes back to the idea and talk about on the last video which is depth of processing. If you can process the material in a deeper level and do this by changing the orienting task that you used. Then you can understand the ideas in a more deep way and you will be able to remember them better. So what do I mean by orienting task in a reading situation. There a lot of people used different reading strategies when they reading a text book. Some people will just read, and just read the text book chapter. Other people will high light and then still a lot of people will take note on the sign, other people will take note within the text book, other people will do chapter summaries.

Now if you can see the idea of depth of processing you can probably see which of these techniques is better. Just highlight, purely highlighting on its own is a fairly shallow level of processing because all you need to do is just trace over lines that look important. You may have to make the mental decision as the warning task, this is important, this is not important but it's not agree depth level of processing because text book often give this away. If you are doing a text, often they will have bolded passages or they all make equations in big letters. So it's very easy to figure out what is important, so highlighting really isn't adding that much value in many ways you are orienting in a shallow level of processing because by highlighting you are focusing on this low level of information processing which is what is important and what's not important. And it's probably better than just reading without any highlighting so when I'm doing this just reading casually and I don't want to spend a lot of time taking notes or doing summaries and I will sometimes use highlight. I'm not saying its universal balance strategy but if you doing something that is important, you need to pass the test later and dense reading. I don't just use highlighting as the main technique or the technique that you use alone, what I do recommend is what I called taking spares note. So sparse notes keep a notebook next to your book where ever you are reading and what you want to do whenever you encounter something that you want to remember, whenever you encounter something that you want to remember, that's the rule you use what you do is you make a very quick note of it in your notebook and you want to paraphrase. So don't write down the idea as its written write down the idea on your own words and you can use omit words that doesn't need to be full complete sentences in paragraph. Just need to do jotting down notes because the goal here is you don't want to take tons and tons of detail note because this will going to be time consuming. Sometimes just taking sparse note is better than just do nothing but completely rewriting every chapter is probably not going to be technique that you can have time for most of your reading assignment. So using this sparse note taking strategy really works on the depth of processing of two levels.

One, you are actually having to rewrite the ideas even if you're rewriting identically to what you've written. You have to rewrite which is a skill, which requires you to think about what's being said more deeply, than just underlining it so that's the first thing. And the second reason it helps you is because of your paraphrasing, you're focusing on thinking what the words mean not what they just say. So this may sound really obvious but when you're reading books often you are just not in a long in understanding the written words as it's written in English, but you do not really understand what the idea means. And this goes on to happen a lot especially when you're sort of losing your train of focus as you're reading so you may go to ten, dozen pages without realizing, oh I'm not really focusing on what this content means. So taking sparse notes can be a really good strategy for that and then I recommend paraphrasing as the good way of doing that another thing you might want to add in and this is something you only do if you have time so if you have to go to a lot of reading and you're already doing it slowly, just taking sparse notes can be good enough. One thing I do like to add if the reading is particularly dense so there's not as much paper you go through but they're very important is what I try to add is the metaphors, diagrams and visualizations that we discussed in the last section. So by using those techniques on top, you're going to even the pre level of processing in the first task and often you can understand the idea even better than everyone else does in one reading because you're using this very good depth level of processing and you will retain the information better. So that's the first idea of active reading.

Another idea you can also employ is to use it sometimes especially when the ideas are very important, is what I called section summaries. So after you finish the major section, you write one paragraph explanation of just what was discussed, what was talked about in the chapter. You don't have to explain the idea you don't have to be thorough; you don't even have to use metaphors, analogies you just say this is what was talked about or what was written about in this particular chapter. By doing chapter summaries again you orient yourself to a deeper level of processing and more importantly you also know that this is a bit of self-check so you read to a section and you cannot write a paragraph explaining what happened in that section. Then that's a good chance you were not using a very deep orienting task when you read through that chapter. So try this out, try to use depth level of processing by taking sparse notes and then chapter summaries and possibly also metaphors, analogies and visualization if you have time. Use that instead of just using highlighting and certainly instead of just reading blank without doing anything. You're using depth level of processing because sometimes you added that a little bit amount of time but remember the study we talked about with changes in height that it actually doubles the amount of words that we're calling. So if you're in this situation then doing a little bit more time. Maybe it takes you 20% more time but if you recall hundred percent more information then you saved time overall that you have to do less studying later on in order to really understand the ideas better.

The example of active reading and practice, so here we open up the book and we taken out a notebook in order to take sparse note. Now the amount of notes you take really depends on the book. If you have a book that is very dense or very difficult then you might want to spend more time and take more notes, more notes means that you retain more information with par less review but as consequences can take a little bit longer to read the chapter. So depending on how much time you have and the level of quality you want for the information you wanted to get control how much note you take. So in this case right here you can see I'm paraphrasing the things that I'm reading from the book. I'm trying to select the word which I consider important information and then I'm creating my own paraphrasing or putting in my own words at the material that I'm covering now. And by doing this, I can also get a better depth of processing than I would if than just copying word notes from data and certainly better than highlighting. Now you also notice that I'm using some of the flow based note taking techniques that I talked about in the last section. So you see I'm drawing arrows between ideas, creating my own paraphrasing and organizing the material on my own way. By creating this connections between ideas and actually creating the web that will later service the foundation for my understanding of the chapter. Now you also notice that I'm not particularly paying attention to just looking for the bolded words or what are the definitions of the key terms. Mistake a lot of students make is they focus on the definitions of words and not really understanding what the word means or what they are in the context. So here they do have some bolded words which are key terms but my exams is not going to be by definitions it's going to be actually using this ideas and understanding the algorithm so I haven't focused on the definitions, I focused on the information that I wanted to extract that's very important, understanding what is the type of information you wanted to extract. In some cases it might be the definitions of words but in another cases it might be understanding how the ideas are used or even just getting a conceptual understanding on how the mathematical or conceptual process works. As you can see here I am also been using some of the flow based note taking techniques create my own metaphors or my own analogies or my own visualization. As you see I wrote down the starting seek where hatching off the possibilities as a way of doing the search mechanism and then I also link that back to the earlier idea on inform versus informed search.

So this is a pretty simple thing. This is something I was doing on the fly when I was actually reading this chapter, it's not the same as creating a diagram or metaphor or visualization you spent some time to focus on the individually but it's just what coming to mind as you going through this. I've also provided some of the criteria that come and play with this type of search. So I will be able to organize this idea which is collection of properties that it has so think about this when you are doing your note. You don't have just to write the information in this linear format. You can use the flow based note techniques that we've been talking about.

Finally, when you finished all of the note-taking that you've done, so you finish the major section, you feel like you covered a lot of information. Now it's time to do the summary. Doing a section summary is very useful, because in doing a section summary you get to actually actively reflect over of what you covered without having just received the information. This also performs a little bit of memory check. Because if you feel that you're missing a little bit that you covered in the last little bit then you know maybe you skip over without solidifying into long term memory. That's going to be a very important check later because when you going to an exam situation, you're not going to just read the chapter you going to preserve the information for long term. So moving the information from long term to short term memory or sorry from short term to long term memory are going to be a part of this process