

Active Reading Skills

Susan Anker, author of the *Real Writing* series: When you read, you might need to do more than just look at the words on a page. I know that when I read something, sometimes, that I need to understand and remember, sometimes I'll have read a couple of pages or turned a couple of pages, and I'll have no idea what I just read, and I know that often happens to you, too.

What I often have to do, and what you may have to do, too, is to get more active—again, much more involved—in what you're doing.

You may want to use highlighters to emphasize different ideas, you may want to make notes to yourself in the margin, you may want to make checks about things you agree with or don't agree with.

Louis Gonzales, student: When I read, I usually take notes in, like, Cornell form. It's where you have a word or a question [to the left of a line], and then an answer to the right of the line, and so it's definitely an easy way of taking notes while reading.

Reading a textbook, I have to have it quiet, 'cause then I'll get lost, and have to put my phone away 'cause a text message will come up, "Let's go chill or do something," and then I'm gone.

Susan Anker: I used to tell students, "Don't have any distractions. Don't have the radio or the TV or anything—cell phones—on, just be very, you know, focused. I've now learned, and this may be true for you, people are so used now to having so many things going on, that many students *can't* read and remember without other things going on around them.

But in order to have it sink in and stick, you still need to do something active. There's activity all around you, but *you* need to be active. So, you really need to just ask yourself questions, answer some of those questions, and highlight things to remember.

Louis Gonzales: When I read textbooks, I try to, like, connect it somehow into my life. Sometimes it's really hard, like chemistry, it's like, how do you really connect that to your life. But, like, I have a human sexuality class, and always when I'm reading, I think about people in my life and how it affects my life, how it affects me personally. I always try to find, like, connections.