



## LEARN TO READ FOR COLLEGE

by the student editors of ***LEAPING FROM PUBLIC HIGH TO A TOP U.***  
a Students Helping Students™ book

You'll probably have more reading assigned for one of your college courses than you had for an entire semester of classes in high school. There will definitely be times when you get huge reading assignments and think: "I can't possibly read all of this in one or two nights!" Depending on what classes you take, the reading may also be very dense and difficult. It can certainly be very disheartening to spend several hours reading a dozen pages.

*"In contrast to high school where reading assignments took maybe half an hour at most, college assignments require large amounts of time and skimming skills. I often have to decide how much of the assignments to do, whereas in high school I was usually able to do every one."*

**Junior,  
Yale University**

The key to getting through your reading is not to read like you usually do. What you have to master is the skill of reading for college. And that means that you have to have a plan of attack for each book or article, you have to prioritize certain sections over others, and you have to master the skimming technique. Here are some specific suggestions:

- **Pay attention in class.** Your professor will either explicitly say which sections of the reading are most critical or will emphasize certain parts of the material that you then should understand in detail. Many profs like to assign more reading than is humanly possible to complete, but paying close attention to what they focus on in class can help you prioritize.
- **Get an overall sense of the material.** It's hard to read page after page of dense material without having a general idea of where it's going. Before you dive into any reading material, look it over to get an idea of what topics it covers, how it's organized, and what sections relate most closely to what's being covered in class or to your paper assignment.
- **Read the introduction.** It's a roadmap to the source and it will give you a good idea of the points covered and the order in which they're covered.
- **Prioritize.** If you're working on a limited time schedule—and you're probably always working on a limited time schedule—find the most important sections of the material and read those first. There's nothing like showing up for the midterm and realizing that the two sections of the book that you never got to are the two sections that are core to the exam.
- **Take notes or highlight.** This is really key. Taking notes or highlighting the material in your books or handouts helps you remember it better. Don't try to write down every single point, but focus on the main thesis of each section and its important details.
- **Skim.** We don't know of many students who graduate from college without mastering the good old skill of skimming. There's no secret formula for how to skim, but you might want to read the introductory section or sentence, and then read the first few sentences of each paragraph. Skimming is a great way to get through the parts of your reading that are not central to what you're learning about.

You have to be careful, however, and pay close attention to what your professors emphasize in their paper assignments and exams. Some profs have quirks like asking questions about material that was in the footnotes of the reading. Try to get a sense of what these might be and read accordingly.

- **Mix it up.** Your mind will get tired if you try to read a hundred pages of dense philosophical writing all in one swoop. Give yourself a break, go outside for a few minutes, change the setting, and read somewhere else. Also, mix up what you're reading—do some for your econ class, some for history, some for psychology, etc.

For more helpful tips and proven strategies from students and recent grads on preparing for academics, getting adjusted, tackling tough classes, avoiding intimidation, getting the most out of your education, and much more, visit [www.StudentsHelpingStudents.com](http://www.StudentsHelpingStudents.com) and buy the Students Helping Students™ guide titled ***LEAPING FROM PUBLIC HIGH TO A TOP U.*** available at bookstores and online stores, such as Amazon.com.

*"I went to a very small public school, and upon entering NYU, I felt like I was really far behind everyone else. People had read books that I'd never heard of and I began to feel like I had slipped through the cracks somehow. I was just expected to know the stuff, or to work that much harder to catch up. It was quite an adjustment."*

**Senior,  
New York University**