

Remembering What You Read – 9 Strategies

Reading lots these days? Having trouble remembering and recalling? For many, reading is a passive activity. And, as with many passive activities, it's challenging for the brain and the body to absorb and assimilate information. On the other hand, the more actively engaged and involved the reader is, with as many senses as possible, the greater the likelihood the reader will be able to remember and recall information. The name of the game is planting information into our memory web in such a way that we can harvest it later on. So, here are nine tools and techniques you can use in the planting process.

1. Initially, it's important to explore your self-images and beliefs around past experiences with reading. The short of it is if one believes and has images of oneself as "never being able to get it," "reading is hard," "I've never been a good reader" "I can never remember what I read," etc., this is the place to start.

All the tools and techniques probably won't work if one believes one could not or cannot "successfully master reading." Or, one will begin to use some new tools and most likely revert back to old habits and patterns and fall into the "insanity" mode of reading, "OK, this time I'll really "try"(failure-based word) and focus and see if it'll be different." Same methods; wishing for different results. One needs to do some work to unfreeze their self-defeating and sabotaging beliefs and images if one is to be open to and refreeze new supportive habits, images and patterns. So, begin to change your self-sabotaging images of who you are as a reader and see yourself as being able to remember and recall whatever you want every time you read.

2. A first tool is to outline the parts of the reading you wish to harvest later on. You can use an outlining 101" format, with the various "levels" of information. Whenever you do any outlining, either on the computer or by hand, always use color (but no black or blue. Whenever you outline, never" copy" text word-for-word from the text. Always change the text and put it into our own words, facilitating the planting process for later harvesting. While you're reading, if possible, play "soft" classical music.

3. If there are key terms or phrases or concepts you wish to own, make flash cards, always in color. Using the flash cards, go through them one by one. The ones you know go into one pile; those you don't into another. Then start again with that other pile. The ones you know go into one pile, the ones we still don't, into another pile. Repeat the process with the "other" pile, as the repetition will support the planting of information. Again, never copy word-for-word from the text. Always massage it to make it yours.

4. Then, using the outline and flash card information, you become the "instructor" and create test questions (open and closed) from the text. Folding a sheet of paper, vertically, the questions go on the outside and the responses go on the inside, always in color. Review the questions or ask someone to "quiz" you, as often as you can.

5. Again, playing the "instructor" and supporting your "getting it," ask a few friends or colleagues if they have some time and the willingness to allow you to "instruct" them in this new material. One of the best ways to learn something is to teach it. So, teach it.

6. Hold the book, or document, in front of you just below eye level. No sitting and slouching and having the book down on or near your lap ...or lying on you desk...both of which can wreak havoc with the neck, sucking energy and tiring the body and adversely affecting the reading experience.

7. In addition to meditation prior to reading which can be very effective, use lots of visualization. That is, become the director of your own movie and create a movie and animate it, seeing and feeling your self in the animation. See, hear, and feel yourself "teaching," or in a discussion, or writing an article using the information as you reconstruct it from memory, and use every sense, and incorporate as many details and feelings as possible in your visualization.

It's important to stay energized and alive during the reading. So.

8. Periodically (every 15 minutes, every 30 minutes but at least every 45 minutes) stop reading and do some energy work. Do some yoga, Tai Chi, stretching, and breathing. When stretching and doing energy work, work with the lower half of the body to bring the energy down from the head where you've been for some time in order to balance the energy in your body. Cup our hands over your eyes (but NOT if you're wearing contact lenses) and with eyes open, move your eyes right to left, left to right, diagonally; or visualize a clock in the back of your head and randomly, quickly, "look at" different numbers on the clock. Or might hold your arm directly out in front of us and move your arm in an infinity sign (first small signs; then larger signs) going one way then the other, and then switching to the other arm (left brain-right brain balancing). Tap your head all over with your fingertips to stimulate and energize the brain.

9. Be aware of your breathing. When your breathing comes from your belly and abdomen, you are relaxed; when it comes from the throat and neck area, you're experiencing stress. So, do often do some deep breathing exercises to move to a relaxed state.

Conscious and consistent use of these nine strategies over time can support you to be a more effective reader, not just in planting information, but also in recalling information as you need it. Happy reading!

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