

1.1: Introduction to Writing Learning Objectives Understand the expectations for reading and writing assignments in college courses. Often teachers will give students many "second chances." writing and follow standards within a particular professional field. Although teachers want their students to succeed, they may not always realize when students are struggling. They also expect you to be proactive and take steps to help yourself. This chapter covers the types of reading and writing assignments you will encounter as a college student. You will also learn a variety of strategies for mastering these new challenges and becoming a more confident student and writer. Throughout this chapter, you will follow a first-year student named Crystal. After several years of working as a saleswoman in a department store, Crystal has decided to pursue a degree in elementary education and become a teacher. She is continuing to work part-time, and occasionally she finds it challenging to balance the demands of work, school, and caring for her four-year-old son. As you read about Crystal, think about how you can use her experience to get the most out of your own college experience.

3 ? Exercise 1.1.1 Review Table 1 and think about how you have found your college experience to be different from high school so far. Respond to the following questions: 1. In what ways do you think college will be more rewarding for you as a learner? 2. What aspects of college do you expect to find most challenging? 3. What changes do you think you might have to make in your life to ensure your success in college?

Reading Strategies Your college courses will sharpen both your reading and your writing skills. Most of your writing assignments from brief response papers to in-depth research projects—will depend on your understanding of course reading assignments or related readings you do on your own. And it is difficult, if not impossible, to write effectively about a text that you have not understood. Even when you do understand the reading, it can be hard to write about it if you do not feel personally engaged with the ideas discussed. This section discusses strategies you can use to get the most out of your college reading assignments. These strategies fall into three broad categories: 1. Planning strategies. To help you manage your reading assignments. 2. Comprehension strategies. To help you understand the material. 3. Active reading strategies. To take your understanding to a higher and deeper level.

Planning Your Reading Have you ever stayed up all night cramming just before an exam? Or found yourself skimming a detailed memo from your boss five minutes before a crucial meeting? The first step in handling college reading successfully is planning. This involves both managing your time and setting a clear purpose for your reading. Managing Your Reading Time For now, focus on setting aside enough time for reading and breaking your assignments into manageable chunks. If you are assigned a seventy-page chapter to read for next week's class, try not to wait until the night before to get started. Give yourself at least a few days and tackle one section at a time. Your method for breaking up the assignment will depend on the type of reading. If the text is very dense and packed with unfamiliar terms and concepts, you may need to read no more than five or ten pages in one sitting so that you can truly understand and process the information. With more user-friendly texts, you will be able to handle longer sections—twenty to forty pages, for instance. And if you have a highly engaging reading assignment, such as a novel you cannot put down, you may be able to read lengthy passages in one sitting. As the semester progresses, you will develop a better sense of how much time you need to allow for the reading assignments in different subjects. It also makes sense to preview each assignment well in

advance to assess its difficulty level and to determine how much reading time to set aside. tip College instructors often set aside reserve readings for a particular course. These consist of articles, book chapters, or other texts that are not part of the primary course textbook. Copies of reserve readings are available through the university library; in print; or, more often, online. When you are assigned a reserve reading, download it ahead of time (and let your instructor know if you have trouble accessing it). Skim through it to get a rough idea of how much time you will need to read the assignment in full. Setting a Purpose The other key component of planning is setting a purpose. Knowing what you want to get out of a reading assignment helps you determine how to approach it and how much time to spend on it. It also helps you stay focused during those occasional moments 4 when it is late, you are tired, and relaxing in front of the television sounds far more appealing than curling up with a stack of journal articles. Sometimes your purpose is simple. You might just need to understand the reading material well enough to discuss it intelligently in class the next day. However, your purpose will often go beyond that. For instance, you might also read to compare two texts, to formulate a personal response to a text, or to gather ideas for future research. Here are some questions to ask to help determine your purpose: How did my instructor frame the assignment? Often your instructors will tell you what they expect you to get out of the reading: Read Chapter 2 and come to class prepared to discuss current teaching practices in elementary math. . Read these two articles and compare Smith's and Jones's perspectives on the 2010 health care reform bill. ? Read Chapter 5 and think about how you could apply these guidelines to running your own business. . How deeply do I need to understand the reading? If you are majoring in computer science and you are assigned to read Chapter 1, "Introduction to Computer Science," it is safe to assume the chapter presents fundamental concepts that you will be expected to master. Regardless of what type of expository text you are assigned to read, your primary comprehension goal is to identify the main point: the most important idea that the writer wants to communicate and often states early on. Finding the main point gives you a framework to organize the details presented in the reading and relate the reading to concepts you learned in class or through other reading assignments. Graphic features, such as sidebars, diagrams, and charts, help students understand complex information and distinguish between essential and inessential points. Additionally, academic journal articles often include a summary at the beginning, called an abstract, and electronic databases include summaries of articles, too. Hard news articles in newspapers present the gist of the news story in the lead paragraph, while subsequent paragraphs present increasingly general details. Taking It to the Next Level: Active Reading Now that you have acquainted (or reacquainted) yourself with useful planning and comprehension strategies, college reading assignments may feel more manageable. Textbooks, for instance, include the aforementioned features as well as headings and subheadings intended to make it easier for students to identify core concepts. Because these texts are written for a specialized, highly educated audience, the authors presume their readers are already familiar with the topic. As noted earlier, reading introductory paragraphs and headings can help you begin to figure out the author's main point and identify what important topics will be covered. You will also be expected to seriously engage with new ideas by reflecting on them, analyzing them, critiquing them, making connections, drawing conclusions, or finding new ways of thinking about a given subject. Teachers often go out of their way to identify and try to help

students who are performing poorly on exams, missing classes, not turning in assignments, or just struggling with the course. For any expository writing that is, nonfiction, informational writing your first comprehension goal is to identify the main points and relate any details to those main points. After identifying the main point, you will find the supporting points, the details, facts, and explanations that develop and clarify the main point. You may find that some questions come to mind immediately based on your initial survey or based on previous readings and class discussions. Understand and apply general strategies to complete college-level reading assignments efficiently and effectively. Recognize specific types of writing assignments frequently included in college courses. This chapter includes strategies for studying efficiently and managing your time. The structure and format of writing assignments is generally stable over Depending on the course, you may be asked to master new forms of a four-year period. Some reading assignments provide valuable tips or summaries worth bookmarking for future reference. Improving Your Comprehension You have blocked out time for your reading assignments and set a purpose for reading. Finally, you can improve comprehension by taking time to determine which strategies work best for you and putting those strategies into practice. Trade books and popular articles may not be written specifically for an educational purpose; nevertheless, they also include features that can help you identify the main ideas. Reading the headings and introductory paragraphs carefully is crucial. In magazine articles, these features (along with the closing paragraphs) present the main concepts. Monitoring Your Comprehension Finding the main idea and paying attention to text features as you read helps you figure out what you should know. Just as important, however, is being able to figure out what you do not know and developing a strategy to deal with it. Textbooks often include comprehension questions in the margins or at the end of a section or chapter. Even when a text does not have built-in comprehension features, you can actively monitor your own comprehension. Many instructors set up online discussion forums or blogs specifically for that purpose. Participating in these discussions can help you determine whether your understanding of the main points is the same as your peers'. Look over sidebars, photographs, and any other text or graphic features that catch your eye. Preview any boldfaced or italicized vocabulary terms. If not, try using headings and subheadings in the text to formulate questions. Understand and apply general strategies for managing college-level writing assignments.

- o Determine specific reading and writing strategies that work best for you individually. You completed numerous assessments of your reading and writing skills in high school and as part of your application process for college. However, regardless of your field of study, honing your writing skills—and your reading and critical-thinking skills gives you a more solid academic foundation. When instructors expect you to read pages upon pages or study hours and hours for one particular course, managing your work load can be challenging. Table 1 summarizes some of the other major differences between high school and college assignments. Table 1—High School versus College Assignments

High School	College
Reading assignments are moderately long.	Your grade is determined by your performance on a wide variety of assessments, including minor and major assignments.
Reviewing for exams is primarily your responsibility.	Outside of creative writing courses, most writing assignments are expository.
	How does this assignment relate to other course readings or to concepts discussed in class? Your instructor may make some of these connections explicitly, but if not,

try to draw connections on your own. Because college-level texts can be challenging, you will also need to monitor your reading comprehension. Identifying the Main Points In college, you will read a wide variety of materials, including the following: ?These usually include summaries, glossaries, comprehension questions, and other study aids. Some texts make that task relatively easy. When you are assigned to read from a textbook, be sure to use available comprehension aids to help you identify the main points. These paragraphs often sum up the main ideas presented. At the far end of the reading difficulty scale are scholarly books and journal articles. When you read scholarly books and journal articles, try to apply the same strategies discussed earlier. The introduction usually presents the writer's thesis, the idea or hypothesis the writer is trying to prove. Headings and subheadings can help you understand how the writer has organized support for his or her thesis. Use them to identify sections you may need to reread, read more carefully, or ask your instructor about later. Try these strategies, adapting them as needed to suit different kinds of texts:

1. At the end of each section, pause to summarize the main points in a few sentences. If everyone in the class struggled with the reading, it may be exceptionally challenging. She found that by actively working to summarize the reading and asking and answering questions, she focused better and retained more of what she read. She also found that evenings were a good time to check the class discussion forums that a few of her instructors had created.

Exercise 1.1.2 Choose any text that that you have been assigned to read for one of your college courses. Summarize the main points of the text in two to three sentences. The truth is, every learner occasionally struggles. However, the most successful students in college are not only competent readers but active, engaged readers. Using the SQ3R Strategy One strategy you can use to become a more active, engaged reader is the SQ3R strategy, a step-by-step process to follow before, during, and after reading. Before you read, you survey, or preview, the text. When you are eager to get started on the coursework in your major that will prepare you for your career, getting excited about an introductory college writing course can be difficult. In college, academic expectations change from what you may have experienced in high school. The quantity of work you are expected to do is increased. Educationally, you are moving into deeper waters. You will be expected to class time for reading and reviewing the material in depth. Teachers often provide study guides and other aids to help you prepare for exams. Writing assignments include personal writing and creative writing in addition to expository writing. However, for some reading assignments, you may be expected to form a general understanding but not necessarily master the content. (Needless to say, it helps to take detailed notes both when in class and when you read.) .If you are assigned to read about a topic that has always interested you, your reading assignment might help you develop ideas for a future research paper. Some of your reading assignments will be fairly straightforward. That is, you will need to stop periodically and assess how well you understand what you are reading. These are less likely to include the study features found in textbooks. Scholarly books and journal articles. Reading chapter titles (and any subtitles within the chapter) will help you get a broad sense of what is covered. It also helps to read the beginning and ending paragraphs of a chapter closely. The language and writing style is sophisticated and sometimes dense. Look for opportunities to discuss the reading with your classmates. If it was a breeze for everyone but you, you may need to see your instructor for help. However, she occasionally had trouble concentrating at the end of a long

day. Speak up in class, schedule a meeting with your instructor, or visit your university learning center for assistance. Instructors respect students who are proactive about their own learning. You may already use some variation of it. In essence, the process works like this: 1. Survey the text in advance. Review and reflect on the text after you read. Skim a few paragraphs. Next, start brainstorming questions about the text. As you begin this section, you may be wondering why you need an introduction. After all, you have been writing and reading since elementary school. It is not enough to understand course material and summarize it on an exam. A good introductory writing course will help you swim. Teachers may set aside some Some reading assignments may be very long. Not all assessments are writing based. Your grade may depend on just a few major assessments. Most assessments are writing based. Again, pay attention to how your instructor presents the assignment. How might I use this text again in the future? Textbooks. Nonfiction trade books. o Popular magazine, newspaper, or web articles. These are written for an audience of specialists in a given field. These features include the following: 5 ? Many trade books include an introduction that presents the writer's main ideas and purpose for writing. Popular articles. As you read, stop occasionally to answer these questions on paper or in your head. Summarize. If you have trouble doing so, revisit that section. If you cannot answer a question, try to determine why. Do not read in a vacuum. These discussions can also serve as a reality check. In your notes, complete the following tasks: 1. Read the text. .2.3. ?2.2.3.4.5.