A disconnect occasionally emerges between students’ reading strategy and the styles of reading that are most helpful for their success in your class. This disconnect may manifest in lower levels of course participation and/or less evidence of content mastery in course assessments. The following suggestions, which draw from recent scholarship on effective interventions that promote student success with reading, may aid in providing students with the guidance necessary to be effective readers in your course.

[Note: This advice will be helpful to all students struggling with reading skills. Some notes may be particularly useful for English Language Learners (http://www.brown.edu/go/ell) to advance their proficiency. Also be mindful of individual student needs which may warrant accommodation in partnership with Student and Employee Accessibility Services (Student and Employee Accessibility Services).]

**Normalize what it means to be an effective reader** (Bean, 2001; Lang, 2016; Wohl & Fine, 2017)

- Talk about your own process for reading. Does your field always read deeply, or do you have strategies about what can be “skimmed?”
- What do you look for when you read deeply versus skim? How might the norms for reading in your discipline differ from students’ prior experiences?
- Signal to students on the syllabus or in the lecture: To what pieces or aspects of readings do you pay particular attention? What is okay for students to skim?
- Encourage students to find a note-taking strategy that works: notes in the margins; paraphrasing in a notebook/annotated bibliography; a separate location for new vocabulary; using reading guides (see reverse).

**Provide context for the reading to invoke student investment** (Bean, 2001)

- Always explain why a reading was included: what the students will learn from it? How will the text shape class discussion and engagement with future material?
- Point to readings that will be important to their success on upcoming assessments.
- Highlight specific features/structures of the text that may be new to students and how they should be used (e.g. footnotes).

**Encourage notes that involve questions and explanation, as they promote retention** (Bean, 2001; Hora & Olsen, 2017; Lang, 2017)

- Advise students that if a question emerges while reading, write it down, and look for the answer in the material. Explain the answer in writing once it is found.
- Paraphrasing the material should occur for all significant readings and involve the student’s interpretation of what the core ideas of the reading are.
Encourage taking explanatory notes in the margins of a text. It “digs deeper” into learning retention than highlighting alone.

**Tool: Course Readers** (Heiner, Banet, & Wieman, 2014; Lieu, Wong, Asefirad, & Shaffer, 2017)

Course readers provide students with a detailed outline of what they should accomplish during their reading. Prompts about specific passages require students to articulate their interpretation of the material. Although readers require a significant time investment on the part of the instructor, but have been shown to promote student mastery of the material (see Lieu et al., 2017).

Instructors design a 3-5 page document that looks similar to an open-book quiz, while directing students to particular passages. Examples of such prompts include:

- Explain the difference between concepts x and y.
- Is Z true? Why or why not?
- Define [term/concept] in your own words.
- What are the differences and similarities between approach X and approach Y?
- Draw a diagram of [concept].
- Drawing from this material, what is the process that you would use to...

Lieu and colleagues (2017) provide extensive examples of their use of this technique in the appendices to their article in CBE – Life Sciences Education, available as an open-access journal here: [http://www.lifescied.org/content/16/3/ar46.full.pdf+html?with-ds=yes](http://www.lifescied.org/content/16/3/ar46.full.pdf+html?with-ds=yes)

**Sources:**


