

**GCTS Student Success Department**

*Reading Strategies*

Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary has a reading requirement of 2,000 pages a semester. Now, this may sound like an overwhelming number of pages to comprehend over a short period of time, but it can be achieved. It is important to sharpen your reading and comprehension skills as a seminary student as these are essential to a successful academic experience. Check out these tips and reading strategies for seminary success.

**How to Read a Textbook**

* Split up your reading throughout several days so that it does not seem too daunting. Identify what date you need to have reading completed by. Count how many pages and divide by how many days you have to read the material. For example, if is a Monday and you have 100 pages to read by Friday you will read about 25 pages each day.
* Read it first like a magazine and not a novel. When you read a textbook like a novel you start reading from the first page without any context. It takes a while for your brain to understand what is going on and you might find yourself rereading until you understand. When you read a textbook like a magazine, start by finding the beginning and end of the chapter or section you need. Simply flip through it slowly like you would a magazine. Read the titles, subtitles, headings, textbooks, graphics, etc. Don’t read the fine print just yet. By flipping through you are preparing your brain for what you are about to read and increasing your reading comprehension. Our brains are like filing systems and when you access the folder of your brain related to the information you are about to read, your brain will quickly recognize, process, and store the new information in that folder.
* SQ4R Reading Strategy:
  + Survey (2-5 minutes): identify the chapter or number of pages you hope to read within the next hour. Flip through like a magazine.
  + Question (2-3 minutes): Identify questions you are hoping to answer while reading.
  + Read (40-45 minutes): read actively and intensely, remove distractions, take notes, underline, or highlight, and make any notes of anything you’d like to come back to.
  + Relate (2-5 minutes): explain to yourself or others what you just read and describe how it relates to previous information.
  + Review (10+ minutes): test yourself or have others test you. Work through all the review questions at the end of the chapter if applicable.

Find a quiet place to read with limited or no distractions. Oftentimes this requires us to be intentional and proactive. A few ideas to limit distractions:

* Leave your phone in another room.
* Find a study or reading location where running into a friend would be unlikely.
* Tell your family or friends that you will be unavailable for the next hour.
* Block off time in your calendar.