

By Allie Autrey

Read Like You've Never Read Before: Boring Textbook Edition



If you're anything like me, you probably hate reading textbooks just as much as I do. Have you ever had overnight readings of close to 50 pages because you spent too much time watching Netflix? Well you're basically screwed, right? Wrong! I'm not telling you to put off your reading assignments (no matter how boring they are) just because you want to watch some Netflix. But I understand that sometimes we as humans tend to procrastinate. Now I know that there are a select few that don't procrastinate until the last minute. That's awesome! But maybe you still find yourself suffering with getting through messy readings. The good news is that I am here to help. So here are some tips on how to survive that mess called reading.

Step 1: Title and Page Count

As cheesy as this may sound, time management is key for large information filled readings. The title is a helpful hint for uncovering what you are going to read about, and it is something that can save you a lot of time in the long run. It is something to be used to guide you through the reading. Now, actually starting the reading can be pretty hard, especially when Netflix is right in front of you. So start by opening your book and going to the assigned reading section. Look at the title. Here is one as an example:

“Treatment of Infectious Mastitis during Lactation: Antibiotics versus Oral Administration of Lactobacilli Isolated from Breast Milk”.

Does the title speak to you? What is it saying? Are you motivated to read, or do you just want to take a nap? Well, you can't take a nap just yet. You need to look and see just how many pages you actually have to read, because like I said before, you'll need time to read and absorb everything, especially if the title seems complex. Once you've looked at the title and counted how many pages you have to read, you can either nap, or you can read!

Step 2: Subtitles to Help Get 'Er Done

Yep, you heard me, it's time to get 'er done. Now don't just jump right into reading the whole assignment, there are lots of hints that the author so kindly left for you to smile about. SUBTITLES. Subtitles are your friends. They are clues as to what you are going to be reading about. Let's look at this subtitle as an example:

“Bacterial Counts in the Milk Samples”

This subtitle is clear and to the point. These are the types of things that we are looking for when reading a long information-filled reading. We already read the title and were a little bit confused as to what the general idea was about, but now we read one of the subtitles. Again, it is clear and to the point. We know exactly what that section is going to be about: bacterial counts in the milk samples. It doesn't get much more to the point than that. See? There are hints EVERYWHERE. Use them, and only then can you start reading.

Step 3: X Marks the Spot!

Now you aren't actually looking for buried treasure here, but you are looking for a reading treasure. Can you guess what you're looking for? The main point! You should always try and gather those helpful hints I previously mentioned and try to collect the main point of the article. Hint: sometimes it actually tells you in the title. Who would have thought? Let's look at this title again for an example:

"Treatment of Infectious Mastitis during Lactation: Antibiotics versus Oral Administration of Lactobacilli Isolated from Breast Milk".

I'm not sure about you, but I fell asleep after "Infectious". This title is long and boring and you don't really know what general topic will be discussed. My suggestion to you is to read the first paragraph. These are basically treasure maps! They give you an introduction to what will be discussed and lay it all out in front of you. Let's take a look at the introduction for this complex reading and see if it helps to clear things up.

"Mastitis is a common infectious disease during lactation, and the main etiological agents are staphylococci, streptococci, and/or corynebacteria. The efficacy of oral administration of Lactobacillus fermentum CECT5716 or Lactobacillus salivarius CECT5713, two lactobacilli

strains isolated from breast milk, to treat lactational mastitis was evaluated and was compared with the efficacy of antibiotic therapy.”

Right off the bat we know a little bit more about what is going to be discussed in the reading. It will be talking about the two strains of Lactobacillus and antibiotic therapy to help treat mastitis. See? That was just the introduction, but it helped to paint a clearer picture of what we are going to be reading about. So if you're reading and find yourself lost, just be sure to refer to the map that they have provided; the introduction! This is key to surviving the reading. The main point I want to get to you is to figure out what the heck they are talking about. Once you do that, reading will be easy-peasy.

Step 4: Jump In

The time has come. You've read the title, counted the pages, examined the subtitles and discovered what exactly it is that you have to read. You've discovered the main point of the piece and kept keywords for easy referral in the back of your head. You have the tools, you have the instructions, now you just need to put in the work and see your piece unveil! Yep, you heard me, you have to put in work. Although you can get lots of details from the hints they leave you, they don't tell you everything. Reading is a lot like that treasure map we talked about; it tells you where to go and how to get there, but there are still treasures hidden along the journey. So that means that you have to read it. The whole thing. Just in case you missed something! You probably won't miss a main point, but perhaps a certain name is mentioned that is important. Like I said, you won't find ALL of the important details in the hints you are now familiar with, so that is why it is important to read the whole thing.

Step 5: Make a Scrapbook

Don't actually make a scrapbook, but rather do something to help you remember what you just read. If there are key images, explain WHY they are significant. HOW do they relate to the main point? WHAT about this image drives the point home? If grandma were to show you a scrapbook picture of a baby with a shoe in its mouth, would you be able to understand it? Maybe if that baby was you, yes. But if it wasn't you and you didn't know the actual story behind it, there's no way you'd be able to understand it. Not all of us are like grandma. We can't all see an image and remember every detail that goes along with it. That is why it is important to write things down. If you have to come back to it later (perhaps after a nap break) and resume, maybe you totally forgot what you already read! No worries though because you wrote a bomb summary to guide you through what you already read. See, you're awesome, and you made reading so much easier on yourself because of it.

Since some of you may not have been all that familiar with this reading technique, I won't assume that you took notes on this article... but you should have! I'm biased because I wrote it and think it's important, but I also think that you should find it pretty helpful. I'll help you out with a quick summary in case you decided to skim over it. I'm in college, I know how that stuff works!

1. Audience? College Students
2. Main Point? Organization and Time Management
3. Tips and Tricks? Titles, Subtitles, and Introduction
4. Forgetting Something? Take Notes and Summarize
5. Reward? NAP...or Netflix... or an A in the class because you read and remembered!

Hopefully you find this article helpful, and who knows, maybe when you're a famous scholar some time in the future, you'll look back and remember who it was that made you so successful... YOU!