
Help! I Highlight the Whole Page

How to Actually Find the Important Stuff When You Read

If you have ADHD or just struggle to figure out what matters when reading, you're not alone. It can feel like everything is important, so you highlight the entire page. But that actually makes it harder to remember things later. The key? Learn how to read actively, not just passively. Here are some practical strategies you can try:

Before You Read: Get Set Up

1. Survey the Page

Look at the title, headings, subheadings, bold or italicized words, bullet points, pictures, graphs—anything that *pops out*. Ask yourself:

- *What do I think this section is about?*
- *What do these images or charts show me?*
- *Are there vocabulary terms or key points already highlighted for me?*

2. Set a Purpose

Decide what you're trying to find out. Try asking:

- *"What's the big idea here?"*
- *"What do I need to remember from this?"* These questions can help you focus while reading.

While You Read: Stay Engaged

3. Use Active Reading Tools

- Highlight after reading a paragraph or section, not while reading.
- Pick just one sentence or key phrase per paragraph to highlight.
- Don't highlight everything, less is more.
- Write short notes in the margins or in a notebook. Use your own words!

4. Try Color-Coding

- Use one color for *definitions*, another for *examples*, and a third for *main ideas*. This helps your brain sort and organize info more easily.

5. Use a Bookmark or Ruler

- Slide a ruler or bookmark down the page to keep your eyes from jumping around. This keeps your attention on one line at a time.

6. Be an Active Reader

Reading is not just looking at words it's thinking while you read.

-
- Ask questions like, “*What does this mean?*” or “*Why is this important?*” • Say the ideas out loud or explain them to someone else.
 - Think: “*What might be asked about this on a test?*”

Get the Big Picture

Sometimes reading feels like you're getting random puzzle pieces with no box to show what it's supposed to look like. Try this:

- Take your course outline and make a “map” of the main units.
- For each chapter or unit, make a smaller map showing the topics inside it.
- Keep track of where you are on the map as the course goes on. This helps you connect ideas and remember the “why” behind them.

After You Read: Make It Stick

7. Summarize in Your Own Words

After a section, pause and say (or write):

- “*What was the main idea?*”
- “*What are the key details that support it?*”

Try writing a short summary in the margin or in a separate notebook.

8. Quiz Yourself

Cover up your notes or highlights and try to recall the info. Then check if you got it right. Doing this regularly helps you remember more and reduces stress before exams.

Reading Online? You've Got Options

You can usually print an online article as a PDF. Then, using free tools like Adobe Acrobat Reader, you can:

- Highlight
- Add notes
- Organize your ideas

Final Tips:

- Slow down when the reading gets hard. Re-read and ask questions.
- Don't be afraid to ask someone to read it with you or explain it aloud.
- Don't just read. *Interact* with the material.
- Think about *why* you're interested (or not), and what that tells you about your learning style.

Remember: Reading is a skill, and like any skill, it takes practice. The goal isn't to highlight everything it's to understand what you're reading. These strategies can help you stop drowning in yellow and start actually learning.

References:

1. Afflerbach, P., Pearson, P. D., & Paris, S. G. (2008). Clarifying differences between reading skills and reading strategies. *The Reading Teacher*, 61(5), 364–373. <https://doi.org/10.1598/RT.61.5.1>
2. Dunlosky, J., Rawson, K. A., Marsh, E. J., Nathan, M. J., & Willingham, D. T. (2013). Improving students' learning with effective learning techniques: Promising directions from cognitive and educational psychology. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 14(1), 4–58. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1529100612453266>
3. Guthrie, J. T., Wigfield, A., & Perencevich, K. C. (2004). *Motivating reading comprehension: Concept-oriented reading instruction*. Routledge.
4. Kiewra, K. A. (1989). A review of note-taking: The encoding-storage paradigm and beyond. *Educational Psychology Review*, 1(2), 147–172. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01326640>
5. McNamara, D. S. (2007). *Reading comprehension strategies: Theories, interventions, and technologies*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
6. Meyer, B. J. F., & Ray, M. N. (2011). Structure strategy interventions: Increasing reading comprehension of expository text. *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education*, 4(1), 127–15

