Try Making Selective Use of Strategies

Chose the parts of the SQ3R strategy which are most applicable to your immediate reading purpose. For example, when you are new to the material you are reading, you may find it more beneficial to take the focus off of the questioning stage and focus more strongly on the surveying stage to give yourself a stronger sense of the contents of the text. If your purpose is to review for an exam, implementing the questioning stage of the strategy may provide you with a quick way to quiz yourself.

Monitor Your Progress

As you read, monitor your comprehension of the text, and try to make note of your difficulties or things you need clarified.

Create Alternative Strategies

If your reading material is not divided into sections and does not have headings, it may be helpful if you try to write your own headings as you proceed through the reading so that you may return to review the reading later in an organized fashion. Also, a general introduction, or a background on the subject from another book or from class may be a useful start to your reading.

Focus on Staying Motivated

Remember that implementing a reading strategy is not going to provide a quick fix, it is going to take practice but is going to benefit you immensely in the long run. Don’t get discouraged!
**Become an Active Reader**

If you’ve ever found yourself moving your eyes over the words of the text but found your thoughts were off somewhere else, you’ll know how much time re-reading long passages of text consumes. Reading more actively (that is, thoughtfully) can make reading more effective and efficient. Read with the aim of understanding and relating the ideas of the text to your existing knowledge, previous readings, lecture material, and the goals of the course. As you read, summarize main ideas, interpret the themes of the reading, think critically, and try to state the material in your own words. It isn’t necessary to memorize everything written in the text. Instead, focus on reading selectively, extracting information that is relevant to your course and your purpose as a reader.

**Begin By Surveying the Material**

“Survey” before you begin reading. This step will allow you to get an overview of the material you are about to read. You can determine what information will be covered and the way in which it is laid out by briefly examining the chapter and section titles, headings and subheadings, as well as reading introductions, conclusions and chapter summaries. You may also want to take note of any bold or italic type, charts, diagrams, or photographs. Skim or scan these structural features of your text to establish general awareness about the contents of a specific reading, and to help you focus in on the key information.

**Ask Yourself Questions**

After surveying or previewing the text, develop a series of guiding questions and apply them to what you read. Reading is a thinking activity. Questioning at various levels moves you to thinking at those various levels. When we ask only the most basic questions, we think only the most basic thoughts. When we question at deeper levels, we think more deeply. Typical initial questions begin with “who, what, where, when, why and how.” Once you are more advanced, you can begin questions with, “how does x relate to y, what are the pros and cons of, why is this valid or invalid, etc…” Questioning also assists you in concentrating and evaluating the depth of your own understanding as you go along, and provides a short cut to reviewing later on.

**The SQ3R Strategy**

Try the SQ3R method (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review) the next time you read. Key learning steps are comprised in this strategy: previewing for an overview, questioning, summarizing, recording ideas in key word form, reciting ideas, reflecting about what was read, reviewing learning regularly. The benefits of SQ3R include reduced reading and studying time, greater concentration and focus while you read, and improved recall of key information.

**Make Summary Notes**

Highlight/make notes about the main ideas of the text in the margin as you go. Usually there is one main idea per paragraph, or group of paragraphs; the remainder of the material is supporting details/arguments that elaborate on the central concepts. Your marginal notes may also refer to details, questions, disputes, or ideas that require clarification. Notes are meant to abstract ideas from longer stretches of text. Creating summary notes after each major section, or at the conclusion of your reading, will help you to consolidate the learning you have done while reading. Reviewing and reflecting on the notes you take can help you continue to think about the ideas you have read about.

**Practice Reciting and Reviewing**

Review your summary notes, highlights, and questions frequently. Compare this information to your lecture notes, and make note of any differences emphasized in the readings that are not mentioned in class. By reciting the material you have read, either verbally or written, you provide yourself with a way in which to recall that information more readily and it requires you to think through what you have read. By taking out your reading notes or opening your book again at the end of the week you will remember much more information from your readings session than if you were to leave it until exam time before you review.