

Teaching Tip: Effective Digital Reading

Previous Teaching Tips have focused on student reading ([Course Packs Made Easy](#), and Getting Students to Read Effectively [Part I](#) and [Part II](#)). Today's tech-savvy students have many options when it comes to accessing and engaging with course readings; they could be read on a laptop or desktop computer, a smartphone, an e-reader, a tablet, or even a television screen. Below are some strategies that teachers can use to ensure that students, when reading on screens, are as effective as when reading the "old fashioned way," on paper.

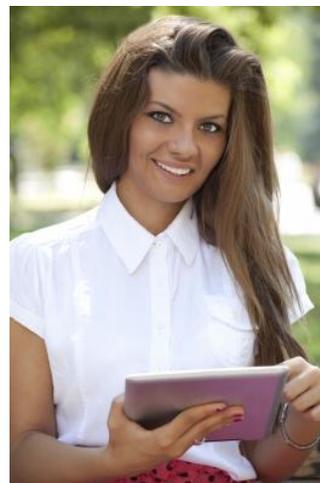


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Annotation

According to reading specialist [Mark Pennington](#), one of the best ways for students to immerse themselves in a reading, and therefore better understand the material, is to take notes on the page. The ability to jot down summaries or diagrams in the margins or highlight key concepts or quotes can be somewhat lost when reading on a digital platform. Some solutions to this are:

- For students who read on computer screens, to make good use of the "highlight text" and "add sticky note" functions of the [Adobe](#) pdf reader when using a computer to read. The highlighting and notes can be saved for future referral.
- For students who read on tablets or smartphones, to use the annotation features provided by the free app, [Foxit MobilePDF](#) (select your operating system for the free download link). Students can access pdf files using this app and are able to highlight, underline, circle, and write notes on the file.
- A "medium-tech" compromise would be to pair the digital reading with a physical notebook. By making sure to mark down what page or paragraph of the digital reading their notes refer to, students can track and note important elements or concepts using pen and paper.

Self-Regulation

According to [Maryanne Wolf](#), author and neuroscientist, having good reading comprehension skills also requires a lot of self-regulation. This is especially true when considering digital reading, as there may be advertisements, photos, and hyperlinks to negotiate. By bringing this information, and the importance of note-taking and annotating while reading, to the students' attention, you may find that this encourages some of them to be more aware and reflective of how (and how well) they read.

Eco-Friendly Alternatives

As we near the end of the semester, students may be gearing up to review weeks of readings, class notes, and PowerPoint slides. To some, the thought of mastering digital annotation this late in the semester may be too much (understandably!). In order to remain environmentally conscious and to reduce the cost of printing for your students, you can encourage them to print out notes on scrap paper (there is often a hefty supply beside the printing machines in the college) or ensure that they are printing multiple slides per page if accessing pdf or PowerPoint slides.

For more information on student reading comprehension and learning, [contact us at the PDO!](#)