



# HARVARD COURSE IN READING AND STUDY STRATEGIES

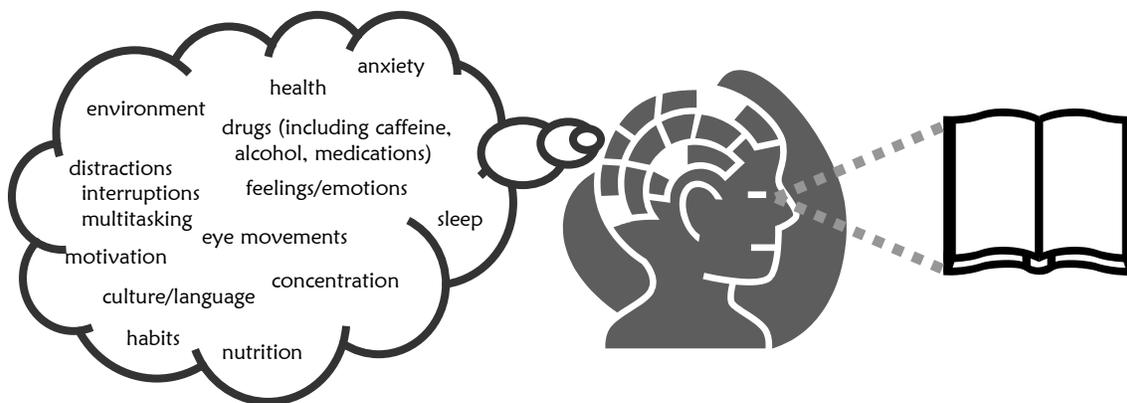
## GAUGING YOUR MIND, YOUR MISSION, YOUR MATERIALS



As you go about your work, it is important to keep an eye on how things are going, so that you can approach your reading actively and mindfully rather than passively and mindlessly. This means continually gauging your *mind*, your *mission*, and your *materials*, and recognizing how these three factors are intertwined.

### Gauging Your Mind

Gauging your mind means taking stock of any internal factors that might have an effect on your ability to read effectively. For example: How alert are you? (Well-slept? Hung-over?) How are you feeling? (Motivated? Anxious? Oppositional?) How proactive are you being? (Strategic? Passive?) It also means being mindful of external factors over which you might have some control. For example: Have you chosen an environment conducive to studying? (Your room? The library? A café? Another study space? A party!?) Have you taken steps to reduce distractions? (Muted your phone? Turned off email alerts?)

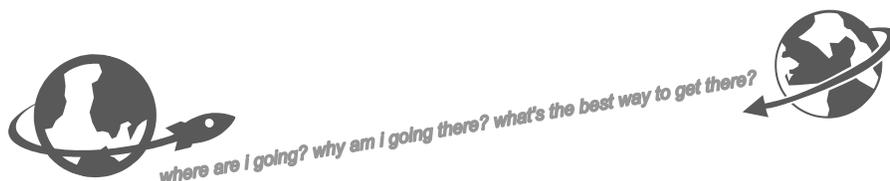


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## Gauging Your Mission

Gauging your mission means taking stock of your purpose for reading what you are reading and choosing appropriate reading strategies given that purpose.

With regard to your purpose: Are you taking a first look to get oriented? Do you need to remember details? Are you reading to be able to discuss the material in class? Are you browsing for good paper topics? Do you have a deadline or time limit? Do you need to boost your concentration? Will you need to use your understandings to solve novel problems? Are you searching for specific information?



## Gauging Your Materials

Gauging your materials means taking stock of the content and medium of your reading materials. Are you reading a book, article, on line? Does the reading involve text, symbols, formulae, images? Is the material very new to me or do I already have some familiarity with it? Does the material provide ways to check my comprehension and/or do I have to invent ways to test myself?



## Taking the Controls and Reading Strategically

As you gauge your mind, your mission, and your materials, you will find yourself developing some ideas as to what might be the most effective study approaches or strategies to use... or at least what might be the *least* effective! For example, suppose you are tired, and you are preparing for a discussion in class, and the reading material is long and unfamiliar to you. You might decide that it wouldn't be wise to begin reading with a word-by-word approach, reclining comfortably on your cozy bed! You might choose instead to find a brightly-lit room and a desk to study at, and approach the reading with an active Q&A approach, having reviewed the syllabus and your class notes to get a sense of the context for this particular reading. (And perhaps you might rethink your sleep schedule!) Remember that you have a wide repertoire of study strategies to try. Gauging your mind, your mission, and your materials will help you make good judgments about how you approach your reading.