



Reading Strategies: The KWL Method

KWL, an acronym for **Know, Want-to-know, and Learned**, is an effective way to read with purpose. KWL is easy to apply and can lead to significant improvement in your ability to learn efficiently and to retain what you have learned. The active steps follow the acronym KWL and are generally organized in the form of a three-column chart:

KNOW	WANT-TO-KNOW	LEARNED
Before reading, assess and record what you know.	Set a purpose for your reading. What do you want to learn from the text? As you read, maintain focus on your purpose.	After reading, reflect, note and review what you learned from your reading.

In column 1, write down what you know about the text’s topic. What have you read, heard, or experienced that is related to the topic? What is the context? Who is the author? When was the text written? Who published it?

In column 2, continue your pre-reading work, noting what you want to know after reading the text. What do you want to know? What you write in this column could refer to your personal goals; in academic reading, however, it will more likely have to do with what you need to learn from the reading for your class. What does this text have to do with the learning outcomes for your class? How does it relate to other reading assignments or material you are covering in class? How does it reinforce or challenge what you are learning, exploring or discussing in class?

Preview the text, observing title, prefatory material, headings and subheadings, and any charts, pictures, or other visuals. Compile a list of questions based on what you’ve determined you want to know to focus your reading.

In column 3, answer and record the answers to questions you posed before you began reading. Write down the main ideas from the text, as well as what you found surprising, controversial or hard to understand. Compare what you’ve written in the “learned column to what you wrote in the “want-to-know” column. Have you accomplished what you set out to accomplish in your reading? Consider ways in which what you learned helps you understand ideas or concepts being explored in your class.

Though it was introduced as a strategy for reading comprehension, the KWL method can be applied to any learning situation, such as taking a class, listening to a lecture, watching a documentary, participating in a classroom activity, attending a workshop and so on.

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