Comprehension and Concentration

This is a step-by-step exercise to build better comprehension and concentration skills. Use any textbook or article you wish.

1. Read a portion of a sentence or until you have at least one idea or fact. Stop and paraphrase (put into your own words) what you have learned. Hypothesize or imagine what might or should come next.

2. Read again to the end of another fact or thought. Add the new material to the first idea, dropping irrelevant or repetitive material.
   a. Decide what is probably the topic of the paragraph and what is a supporting detail about that topic.
   b. Again hypothesize what should come next. What information is needed or what direction should the material take?

3. Continue reading. Stop after each new thought input to repeat the thought processes suggested in #2 above. As the amount of information increases, organize the major and minor point relationships (outline).

4. At the completion of a comprehensive section or unit, restate or write (underline, outline, summarize, etc.) the key idea(s) and supporting points.

5. Evaluate what has happened.
   • Was the order or presentation of the material logical? Was all necessary included? Were you misled by the order or vocabulary used? How else might the content have been ordered for better understanding? Think from the main idea or key point down to the smallest fact or start with the smallest fact and build to the main idea.

   • What are the most likely questions you might be asked on this material? What do you want to remember personally? How many different ways could different kinds of test questions attack this material (essay, multiple choice, etc.)?

   • If appropriate, what viewpoints, attitudes, or biases are reflected beyond the actual facts in this writing?

   • What other topics apply to what you just learned? What else do you know or could you infer in general from this information?

6. After enough units have been covered (from a series of paragraphs to perhaps a whole chapter), assess the author's style and its effect on you.
   • Where are the key points usually placed? What kinds of supportive material is provided? Just how much actual knowledge is there? How well ordered is the presentation of material? What difficulties do you seem to have with the content (too much/not enough, explanation, etc.)? This type of questioning will: 1) help you to sharpen your comprehension attack on the reading; and 2) help you to anticipate what will happen. This will help you to read more rapidly, understand more easily, and decide what will best aid retention.