

ADVICE FOR READING A TEXTBOOK!

A textbook is NOT a novel. Although you may have to read the entire thing, it is not wise to start on page 1 and read straight through to the end. You read these texts to acquire new factual information, not just to follow a story, and there are specific techniques for reading a text. Below is some advice:

LOOK AT THE TITLE PAGE

- The title is the first clue to the book's focus and direction for a chapter.
- Who wrote the book?
- What background and authority do they have? (Did your instructor write it?)

READ THE PREFACE AND INTRODUCTION

- In the preface (likely titled Preface; this is the bit right before the chapters begin), the author(s) will explain new ideas or techniques that will be covered.
- The introduction (first few paragraphs *before* any chapter begins) will explain the book's major focus, and any special or updated features. It tells you what to expect and to look for.

READ THE TEXT'S TABLE OF CONTENTS

This is a place where each section of the book is displayed before any chapters. Pay attention to the different sections. Ask yourself:

- How are the book's major units divided?
- How are chapters organized, and what do they contain?
- Are there pre-chapter pages, outlines, summaries, and introductions?
- Are there study or review questions, vocabulary lists?

FLIP TO THE "BACK"

(pages at the back of the book such as an index, glossary, appendices, maps, charts, or tables)

- The **index** lists pages where specific topics are discussed; it's the best way to find material quickly for study or review. Know how to read the index and use subheadings and cross-references.
- Use the **glossary** to learn the meaning and pronunciation of the terminology. Vocabulary is a major element of a subject, especially when you are just beginning.
- **Appendices** contain information the author thinks is important but which doesn't fit neatly into the text. There might be copies of documents, lists of formulas, discussions of problems or background information.
- Materials such as maps, illustrations, tables, and flow charts are valuable sources and study aids. These are visual representations of the material you are learning.
- Visit the text's website or open its attached CD if possible. You'll find outlines for chapters, flash cards, practice quizzes, and many other useful and even entertaining study aids.

HAVE A PLAN WHEN YOU READ

- Flip through and pay attention to introductions, headings and subheadings, vocabulary in boldface or italics, charts and illustrations, "sidebar" items separate from the main text, summaries, study or review questions, and vocabulary lists.

- Read outlines, learning objectives, introductions and/or summaries **first**; they tell you what concepts and terms to look for in the main text.
- See how many of the study or review questions you can answer based just on what you've already read.
- Have paper available to make notes from each section of the chapter.
- Be in a setting that you work well in. Quietness is nice.

WHEN YOU READ

- **NOW** read the main body of the chapter, alert to the ideas you saw in the introduction/summary and for answers you didn't get or concepts you didn't understand. Look for lists, theories, definitions, explanations, and conflicts. Note references to illustrations and sidebars, but don't spend too much time on them unless you find them helpful.
- Don't expect to understand everything on the first reading. As you read, make notes in the text or on paper; ask questions, copy or highlight important vocabulary, names and dates, and major concepts. Use paper flags to mark important pages. :)

AFTER YOU FINISH READING

- **Reread the parts of the chapter** that focus on information you didn't get the first time through. Use visual aids such as charts and tables to examine information in a new way. If some parts are still confusing, note them. See if the instructor explains them in class; if not, be sure to ask about them or do some investigating on the web.
- Try your best to explain what you have read to someone else. Retelling someone the facts or ideas of a chapter is a great way to try to store things in Long Term Memory. If you can't do any retelling, then that is a BIG clue that you need to revisit the text.

Reading a textbook has the potential of feeling very choppy or like a stop-and-go process. Remember, you are reading to **acquire, comprehend, and retain** information, you have to be actively a part of the words, and strategically thinking about what is being said. It is going to take longer than reading the newspaper.

Your reading speed may seem slow. You may need to seek out the ideal environment and limit yourself from distractions. You may have to reread complicated information several times to fully understand and remember it. All of this is **OK!**