

Textbook Reading Strategies

BEFORE READING

Preview the reading.

Look through the reading to get a feel for what topics will be discussed. Look at the titles, headings and subtitles, the vocabulary lists and glossaries, bolded words, the diagrams, as well as any special interest boxes or captions in the margins. These are the main topics that the authors have already identified for you and you can use these to structure your notes.

Come up with a game plan.

You don't necessarily have to do your reading in order. You can get an overview of the entire reading assignment and then decide where you want to start. Consider a brief review of the information you already know, and spend your energy on any information that is less familiar to you. Set a purpose for your reading – what do you need to understand, know, or be able to do after reading? Consider formatting your notes in this way or writing a list of questions that you want to answer while reading.

WHILE YOU READ

Incorporate auditory learning.

Consider reading out loud to yourself or using a screen reader for digital textbooks. Reading and listening at the same time can help to reinforce new material.

Take breaks and pace yourself.

Make sure you take a 10 minute break every 30-45 minutes. Set a timer. Your brain needs breaks in order to process and store information but also to keep it fresh and focused.

Find your routine.

There are many different strategies that may work for helping you effectively learn information from your readings. Consider trying the following:

- Write in your textbook.
- Highlight with a strategy.
- Mark the passages that you want to review and come back to them later.
- Read with a partner.
- Read an entire section or page before taking any notes.
- Take notes using your own words.
- Try to take concepts and definitions and connect them to something you already know. Material in isolation can be harder to remember than material that is connected to other concepts.

AFTER READING

Review your notes.

Reviewing your notes allows you to think again about the concepts you've learned. Repetition is key to having information stick in your brain. Focus on main concepts and related them to material covered in class. Consider creating flash cards or a sheet of mnemonic devices to help your memory.

Incorporate multiple learning strategies.

Read your notes out loud, draw a mind map, and try to think of creative ways to engage your visual learning, verbal learning, and auditory learning. This helps to retain the information into multiple 'storage areas' in the brain, which can help to move beyond memorization and towards understanding.