

Textbook Reading Strategies

“Reading furnishes our mind only with materials of knowledge; it is thinking that makes what we read ours.” - John Locke

Questions to ask yourself about Textbook Reading:

- Do I preview a chapter - introductions, headings, summary, key terms?
- Do I know what kind of test I am studying for so I know to look for specific and general details?
- Do I find meaning of terms used in concepts or theory in the text?
- Do I take notes or make annotations in my textbook so I know what to come back to later?

Each semester students spend a lot of money on their textbooks and many don't understand how to truly get the most information out of them. It's important to use textbooks as effective study tools. To truly learn from our textbooks, we must understand their structure, why we are using them, and how to get the most out of them. Here are some ways we can use our books effectively and get the most out of them.

First, there are 3 steps to reading your textbook more efficiently:

1. Pre-Read: Look at the section you are reading and determine what information is important to learn. This can be done by looking at key concepts, definitions, typographical aids, stories, pictures etc. This does not mean reading the chapter, but instead skimming to develop a basic understanding of what the section is about and what you need to learn.

2. Read: Fully read the material for concepts and understanding.

3. Review: Review the material to determine what areas you need to focus on to increase your understanding or that you may have missed when you read the material.

Why is this important? Most people forget 40-50% of what they read within 15 minutes! This allows us to see the information on more than one occasion, and the more we see something the easier it is for us to remember it. These three steps can help you recall information. Ask yourself questions about the material when pre-reading. Look for what you're going to get out of it. Make notes during the reading step, go over them during your review, or make outlines of chapters if you still have trouble retaining the information.

Other techniques:

Highlighting - Effective use of highlighting allows the reader to return to the text and focus their studying on the material that is most important.

Taking Notes - While going through the textbook, taking notes will help consolidate the information the reader is learning. This also is a form of active learning and provides a fantastic study tool for review later.

Types of text:

It is also important for us to recognize the type of text we are reading. Text for science, math, literature, social sciences, and various others all vary in the manner in which they present information and the speed at which one will be able to read them. When you read material, take into account the type of text it is in order to best determine how to learn the most from it and the way in which the material is presented in the text.

Textbook structure:

Understanding the basic structure of a textbook can also be used as an advantage. Most writers of textbooks put each section in for a purpose, to help the reader understand the subject matter most efficiently. By understanding what each part of the textbook is for, it can be easier to study the material.

Preface:

- It is the author's attempt to introduce the text to you.
- It explains why the book was written and to what audience it was written for.
- It helps to determine how the text is organized.
- It explains the limitations, if any, of the text.
- It tells some of the references that the author used.
- It explains the main emphasis of the text.
- Learning aids may be included.

Table of Contents:

- It outlines what is included in the text.
- It lets the reader find areas within the text quickly.

Openings to Chapters:

- They are one of the most important parts of the chapter.
- They set the tone for what is to follow.
- They most likely include new concepts and terms that may need to be looked up in order to understand what is being said throughout the remainder of the text.

Typographical Aids:

- Examples include italics, bold, numbers, headings, sub-headings, colored print, etc.
- They allow the reader to understand what the writer of the text wants to emphasize.

Vocabulary Lists / Key Terms:

- Glossaries allow the reader to understand potentially new terms.
- Without understanding key terms, it is impossible to completely understand the text.
- Vocabulary explanations help the reader to understand the context the author is using for each term.

Chapter Review Questions:

- They serve as discussion questions.
- They let the reader know what areas of study should be focused on.
- They can help to give the reader an idea of how well they are learning the material.
- They can be used to determine what areas you should study more thoroughly.

Graphic Aids:

- They may be a better way to show certain examples.
- Some people learn more effectively through the use of graphics.