

Helpful Hints for Reading College Textbooks

(Hints taken from *The Houghton Mifflin Guide to Reading Textbooks*, 2nd ed., Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 2005)

1. Read your textbook assignments in an environment with the fewest possible distractions.
2. Manage your time. You are less likely to absorb what you are reading if you are rushed, or if you are constantly stopping and starting.
3. Read the material out loud. The reinforcement of hearing the text, in addition to reading it, can make a big difference.
4. If the teacher provides a study guide, read it before you begin reading your textbook. This will help you to identify the key points your instructor is looking for.
5. Read the learning goals and objectives first to give you an idea of what to look for while you are reading.
6. Review the questions, discussion questions, and exercises at the end of the chapter before you start reading. This will help you differentiate between major details and minor details in the text.
7. Read the chapter summary before you read the chapter. This will help you determine whether or not you've learned the major points the author intended for you to learn.
8. Read the key terms and definitions before you begin reading. This will save you the time of having to look up definitions while you are reading.
9. Pay close attention to chapter sub-headings. They are useful in helping you find the main idea.
10. Review visual aids (charts, graphs, pictures, etc.) before you are made to refer to them. Then, you will have a general idea of what the author is talking about when he/she discusses the visual aid in the text.
11. Break the reading assignment down into workable sections. If you try to tackle the entire reading assignment at one time, you will be overwhelmed.
12. Ask yourself these questions when reading: What is the author talking about? What is the point he is trying to make? What information supports what I feel is the main idea?
13. Remember, reading is an ACTIVE process. You must think while you are reading in order to retain information.
14. Take notes. Lots of them.
15. Stop occasionally and "re-create" what is happening in your mind (useful especially in social science textbooks).
16. Don't wait until the night before the test or homework assignment to read your textbook. Pace yourself so you can get the most out of every word you read.