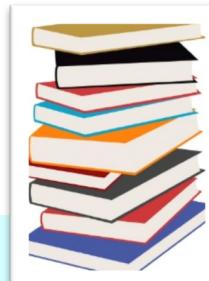


Reading Textbooks



For some of your courses, textbooks are a primary source of information. This type of text is designed in a specific way. Use its features to your advantage!



What's unique about textbooks?

Purpose

Textbooks are dense, informational texts that provide a foundation in a subject. Each chapter is structured around a specific set of terms and ideas.

Audience

Textbooks are written with you, the student, in mind. Authors presume that most or all of the content will be new; there are copious definitions and examples.

Author

The author is likely to be a college or university instructor. In fact, your professor might be the author of your assigned text!

Features

➤ Objectives

Look for an overview of topics on the first page and, possibly, at the start of each section within the chapter. This is your guide to the organization of content.

➤ Sections & Subtitles

Topics and subtopics are clearly delineated with headings. Notice the use of color, font size, and other formatting to draw your attention to these shifts in content.

➤ Graphics

Diagrams, photos, tables, and other visual aids offer concrete examples to illustrate abstract ideas or present details in a compact way.

➤ Vocabulary

Key terms appear in bold, color, or italics throughout the text. Look for end-of-chapter vocabulary lists, which sometimes also include page numbers.

➤ Summaries

Section and chapter summaries provide an introduction to main ideas.

➤ Questions & Exercises

Reviewing questions and practice problems in advance of reading will help you identify main ideas as you read. Return to these after reading to reinforce what you're learning.

➤ Special-Interest Sections & Content in Margins

Look to extra content areas to generate greater interest in topics and to understand application of the material. Vocabulary, guiding questions, and references to supplemental information sources will help you navigate each section of the chapter.

Strategies

1. **Begin at the end.** Read the chapter summary, review questions, and practice problems first, for an introduction to content. Also **preview** headings, graphics, captions, and highlighted terms. These provide an important overview of topics and organization.
2. Record terms and examples on **flashcards** while you read. Mastering vocabulary is a foundational first step toward deeper understanding. There is a "master list" at the core of every textbook chapter.
3. Notice **first sentences** of paragraphs. Often these contain the **main ideas**, while the sentences that follow provide support. Also watch for **patterns** within paragraphs. Certain types of sentences are common (e.g., definitions, examples, explanations of significance, data).
4. **Convert** headings and topics into simple **questions** before reading (e.g., Who...?, What...?, When...?, Where...?, Why...?, How...?). You will read with greater purpose and motivation if you explore your curiosity about topics before diving in. Write or type your questions; then read for answers.
5. **Finish** an entire section or page before marking text or taking notes.
6. Use section breaks, subheadings, and highlighted terms to map out a skeletal **study guide**. There are many possible formats: concept map, table, timeline, Venn diagram, flow chart.
7. Work on the chapter in **intervals**, not a single, marathon session. Dilute your reading across the day and week.
8. Make a habit of **re-visiting** your reading at least once. Notice what was and wasn't addressed during lecture.

