

Reading & Studying Textbooks

AIDS FOR PRE-READING

Textbook Title – The title describes what the whole book will be about or what approach the author is taking. Making note of the title of your text will give you some idea about its contents.

Table of Contents – The table of contents lists all of the text's main topics. It is important to use this tool to note the text's organization and the relationships among different topics.

Chapter Titles – As with the book's title, the chapter titles give you some idea about what you will be reading. These titles help you to identify the main topic for each chapter.

Chapter Preview, Outline or Objectives – Chapter previews or outlines give you both an idea of how the chapter is organized and how to identify main ideas you will need to learn in the chapter. Chapter objectives also help you learn what the author considers to be the important information in the chapter.

Review Questions – It is helpful to look at the review questions before you start reading. They can help you identify the main ideas and important information you are reading. Using review questions helps you concentrate on the information you need to learn and remember after you read the chapter.

Chapter Summary – Reading the chapter summary before reading the chapter can also give you an idea of the information you should be finding as you read. Chapter summaries may appear at the end of the chapter, but many authors are now putting them at the beginning to give you an overview of the key

AIDS TO USE DURING READING

Web-Based Material – Many textbooks now have web addresses where you can find supplementary material and a number of study aids. These can include aids like: additional text, extra problems and exercises, streaming videos, soundtracks, and pictures. All of these aids are meant to make the material more meaningful.

Supplementary Materials – Many textbooks are published with supplementary material such as workbooks, extra readings, and additional sample problems. Sometimes there are computer discs containing these types of materials as well as videos and sound bytes.

Headings – Headings can give you an idea of what you are going to read and the organization of the text. By using headings, you can make connections between what you have read and what you are about to read.

Marginal Notes – It is important to use the marginal notes that the authors use in the text and to also create your own marginal notes as you read. These can include important definitions, questions that you have, connections you find with other texts and chapters, or notes to yourself about other references to use.

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Reading & Studying Textbooks (cont.)

Review Questions – As you read, you should think about and seek answers to review questions provided by the author. You should also try to generate questions of your own. Both of these processes will help you to organize your thinking, remember the material, and concentrate while you are reading.

Graphics – Graphics are used extensively in most textbooks to help you understand and remember the material. It is important that you “read” graphics by looking at the components and recognizing how they are related. These graphics often help to explain or summarize what you have read.

Lists of Key Terms – Using lists of key terms allows you to look up definitions before you begin reading so that while you are reading you can refer to these definitions. You might also write the definitions for each of these key terms as you read about them.

Glossary – The glossary is a textbook-specific dictionary. Using the glossary will help you define words using the intended meaning of the textbook. The glossary is an excellent resource to use especially when reading texts with highly technical language.

Appendix – Often graphics, special descriptions of a technique, tables that can help you work exercises in the text, and other study aids can be found in an appendix. An author will usually suggest that you refer to the appendix when such a reference will help your understanding of the text.

Index – Many times, words or topics that you are reading about in one chapter may have been defined or explained in another chapter. Using the index, you are able to find other places in the text where these words, phrases or names appear. In addition, the material discussed in one text will also be referenced in other texts. Sometimes it helps to look up the index for these other references. This process may improve your understanding of these words or topics.

AIDS TO USE AFTER READING

Chapter Summaries – Summaries can also help you organize your thinking and find relationships among the main ideas. It is also important to write your own summary once you have read a chapter. In your own words, you should state your thoughts about the text. This process helps you relate the content of the text with other material that you will read later.

Review Questions – By answering review questions you test your knowledge about what you have just read. You can then review the answers before you read the next chapter and make connections with the new text to be read. Answering review questions also helps consolidate your new knowledge; this will integrate it with your existing knowledge. Review questions can come from the textbook or your instructor. But for best practice, write and then answer your own review questions.

Suggested Readings or References – Looking at lists of other readings or references can aid your understanding of the material. This is especially true if you are having problems understanding the particular text you are reading. Sometimes looking at similar information presented by another author may make the information more understandable

