

Get Your \$\$\$ Worth from your Textbooks

Professors assign textbook readings as another “voice” to support and expand the material they cover in class. Think of your text as a partner, a source that expands basic concepts with examples and visuals, and as a valuable study aid when you’re preparing for quizzes, tests and exams.

Learn to



Your Textbook

Preface: read it! The Preface tells you how the author has organized the book, and what kinds of road maps and learning strategies are included. The Preface will also tell you about companion web sites, study guides, or other resources that can help you master the material.

Survey the chapter before class. This extra step will save you time in the long run. Your survey will reveal the scope of the content, the organization of the topics presented, and the author’s purpose and point of view. This information creates a structure or outline that you fill in as you read the chapter, attend lecture, and complete assignments.

Here’s what to look for in a chapter survey:

Chapter title tells you the chapter’s main idea. If it doesn’t make sense to you, read the opening section to find a definition of the title.

Chapter objectives are the author’s specific statements of what information is covered in this chapter.

Major headings and subheadings create the skeleton of the chapter, providing an outline for the breadth and depth of information in the chapter.

Visuals add spice to your reading. Authors use visuals to communicate information in visual form rather than as text. Remember, one picture can say as much as hundreds of words.

Highlighted terms are the specialized vocabulary you need to master to understand new concepts. Similarly, pay close attention to **boxed text** or text set off in a separate section.

Chapter summary or review goes over the major points covered in the chapter. If you read this first, you’ll know which concepts to concentrate on as you read.

Glossary and Appendix are quick reference guides to facts such as definitions, concepts, and tables.

“Thinking at its highest is asking the right question.”

Socrates, c. 470-399 B.C.

Thinking while Reading

Think ahead:

1. What is this selection about?
2. What do I already know about it?
3. What do I want to find out?
4. What is my learning goal for this assignment?
5. What kinds of reading strategies are necessary for me to meet my goal?

Think while reading:

6. What have I read about so far?
7. Do I understand what I have read?
8. If I don't understand, what should I do?
9. What is the author saying, and what do I think about it?

Think back:

10. Have I learned what I wanted? Did I achieve my goal?
11. How can I use what I read?

The **SQ3R** method of textbook reading creates the questioning, interactive thinking that characterizes efficient, effective reading for comprehension and remembering. Once this method is mastered, students find that they no longer need to re-read and re-read textbook selections and that they often predict (and therefore, answer) test questions.

Survey: (before class) Skim textbook

Purpose? To prep yourself for class, and to get a general idea of the topic, the number of sub-topics, new vocabulary and concepts, and examples and visuals to refer to when you study.

Question: (before class) Turn each bold heading into question by preceding it with who, what, where, when, why, or how.

Purpose? To set a purpose for reading the material in more detail at a later time. Our minds are programmed to seek answers to questions; the college environment stimulates this as well.

Read: (after class) Read each textbook section to find the answers to your own questions.

Recite: (after class) Recite the answers in your own words. Write your answers and underline key words.

Purpose? Help you think about and understand what you have read, and to help you retain it by speaking and hearing it in your own voice.

Review: (before next class) Answer your questions from memory. Write down any questions you cannot answer.

Purpose? To help you prepare for the eventual test and focus on those things you do not yet know, understand or remember.