

## Reading & Taking Notes from a Textbook

**Unit:** Introduction

**MA Curriculum Frameworks (2016):** N/A

**Mastery Objective(s):** (Students will be able to...)

- Use information from the organization of a textbook to take well-organized notes.

**Success Criteria:**

- Section headings from text are represented as main ideas.
- All information in section summary is represented in notes.
- Notes include page numbers.

**Language Objectives:**

- Understand and be able to describe the strategies presented in this section.

**Notes:**

If you read a textbook the way you would read a novel, you probably won't remember much of what you read. Before you can understand anything, your brain needs enough context to know how to file the information. This is what Albert Einstein was talking about when he said, "It is the theory which decides what we are able to observe."

When you read a section of a textbook, you need to create some context in your brain, and then add a few observations to solidify the context before reading in detail.

René Descartes described this process in 1644 in the preface to his *Principles of Philosophy*:

"I should also have added a word of advice regarding the manner of reading this work, which is, that I should wish the reader at first go over the whole of it, as he would a romance, without greatly straining his attention, or tarrying at the difficulties he may perhaps meet with, and that afterwards, if they seem to him to merit a more careful examination, and he feels a desire to know their causes, he may read it a second time, in order to observe the connection of my reasonings; but that he must not then give it up in despair, although he may not everywhere sufficiently discover the connection of the proof, or understand all the reasonings—it being only necessary to mark with a pen the places where the difficulties occur, and continue reading without interruption to the end; then, if he does not grudge to take up the book a third time, I am confident that he will find in a fresh perusal the solution of most of the difficulties he will have marked before; and that, if any remain, their solution will in the end be found in another reading."

Use this space for summary and/or additional notes:

The following 4-step system takes about the same amount of time you're used to spending on reading and taking notes, but it will probably make a tremendous difference in how much you understand and remember.

1. Make a two-column notes template. Copy the title/heading of each section as a big idea in the left column. (If the author has taken the trouble to organize the textbook, you should take advantage of it!) Leave about  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  page of space for the details for each big idea. (Don't do anything else yet.) This should take about 1–2 minutes.
2. Do not write anything yet! Look through the section for pictures, graphs, and tables. Take a minute to look at these—the author must have thought they were important. Also read over (but don't try to answer) the homework questions/problems at the end of the section. (For the visuals, the author must think these things illustrate something that is important enough to dedicate a significant amount of page real estate to it. For the homework problems, these illustrate what the author thinks you should be able to do once you know the content.) This process should take about 10–15 minutes.
3. Actually read the text, one section at a time. For each section, jot down keywords and sentence fragments that remind you of the key ideas. You are not allowed to write more than the  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  page allotted. (You don't need to write out the details—those are in the book, which you already have!) This process is time consuming, but shorter than what you're probably used to doing for your other teachers.
4. Read the summary at the end of the chapter or section—this is what the author thinks you should know now that you've finished the reading. If there's anything you don't recognize, go back and look it up. This process should take about 5–10 minutes.

You shouldn't need to use more than about one sheet of paper (both sides) per 10 pages of reading!

Use this space for summary and/or additional notes: