# Active Reading to Learn from your Textbook

## Before Reading

### Preview the Chapter:
**Identify the important information and get ready to learn**

**Identify what you will learn in the chapter and prepare to learn it.**

Ask yourself:
- What are the main topics presented in the text? What is important?
- What assessment task (multiple choice test, essay, etc.) will I have to complete with this information?
- What information in the text is familiar? What is unfamiliar?

**T.H.I.E.V.V.E.S.** is an acronym for text features you should preview:
- **T**itle
- **H**eadings
- **I**ntroduction
- **E**very first sentence of sections or paragraphs
- **V**isuals – Diagrams, tables, images (read the captions too!)
- **V**ocabulary - often bolded
- **E**nd questions or Review questions
- **S**ummary

### Make a plan to break up the reading into smaller parts.

- You don’t need to read the entire chapter in one sitting.
- Before you start, you should set goals and stopping points for yourself.

Ask yourself:
- What are the main topics presented in this chapter?
  - Often a chapter will have three – six main topics that are divided into smaller subtopics.
  - The main topics are often presented with headings and the subtopics presented nearby with subheadings.
- Is there a logical place to stop reading so I can divide the chapter into meaningful chunks?

### Build Prior Knowledge:
**Prime the pump of your mental engine**

**Prior knowledge increases reading comprehension**

- It is useful to build up a little familiarity with vocabulary and content before reading about unfamiliar topics.
- After identifying some of the main topics, you’ll read about in the chapter seek out some basic information about these topics from other sources:
  - Watch YouTube videos about the topics
  - Look up unfamiliar terms in an online dictionary
  - Do a quick web search on the topic
- *Don’t spend much time on this. It is only meant to prep you for close reading.*

### Create Questions:
**Make headings and subheadings into questions**

**Effective reading is an active search for answers.**

Ask yourself questions about the important topics presented in the chapter and read to seek the answers to your questions.

- Write down questions in your notebook before you read—leave space to take notes on the answers later.
- Turn headings and subheadings into questions
  - **Possible question starters:**
    - Who is _____ and why is he/she important?
    - What is _____ and why is it important?
    - How does _____ affect _____?
    - How does _____ relate to _____?
    - How does _____ occur?
    - What are the parts and functions of _____?
# Active Reading to Learn from your Textbook

## Active Reading

### During Reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jump Around:</strong></td>
<td>If you noticed a summary, review page, list of objectives, or concept map during your preview—start there!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Read for Answers:</strong></td>
<td>Read to search for answers to your questions.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Annotate:</strong></td>
<td>Use your pencil, and flags to take clear and helpful notes as you read.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Read Visuals:</strong></td>
<td>As you read the text, stop periodically to attend to the diagrams, graphs, tables, maps, and pictures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pause &amp; Reflect:</strong></td>
<td>Read a little, then pause to think, review, and take clear, detailed notes about what you read.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### Gather key points to identify the big ideas and understand the content.

Your textbook is not a mystery novel—you won’t ruin it by reading the end first!

#### Read these first:

- Chapter Learning Objectives
- Chapter Summary
- Chapter review questions
- Vocabulary List

The list of objectives and summary features will help you identify which information is most important before you start reading in more detail.

### Read with your pre-reading question for that section in your mind.

Seek to find answers to your question as you read.

Stop for a moment after every paragraph or so to assess what you just learned.

Ask yourself:

- Did I learn anything in that paragraph that can help me answer my question?
- What was important about that paragraph?
- What do I expect to learn about next?

### Read with your tools at hand – Pencil, flags/tabs, notebook

- Underline Definitions
- Box keywords and important names
- Mark an “Ex.” next to helpful examples
- Mark a star next to the main ideas
- Write notations in the margins
  - Note ideas or points that you want to remember later
  - Rewrite or summarize information in your own words

### Pay attention to visuals—They are not there to make the book pretty!

- Much of the content presented in a textbook is easier to understand in a chart, diagram, graphic, or image.
- Don’t just look at the visuals presented in each section but read them.
  - Talk your way through a diagram, chart, or graphic so that complex processes or structures make sense to you. Use the key vocabulary as you explain the diagram to yourself.
  - While you view the visuals, mentally review the content you have read and tie the ideas to the image to make the content easier to recall later.
- Attend to references to visuals in the running text, (i.e., Figure 3.12, Map 9.1)

### Pause & Reflect:

Stop after every section to self-assess, review, and take notes.

- Write the section title (Your question) and the page numbers
- Write a detailed answer to your pre-reading question for that sub-section – using key terms and concepts.
- Go back over the section to add an annotation that you might have missed.
- Draw diagrams, flowcharts, or webs to connect information and help it make sense.
| Make Concept Cards: instead of Flashcards: Make clear and informative cards that connect key information. | Practice your recall of important information while understanding how terms relate to each other and how they apply to the overall topic.  
- A flashcard is a simple term and definition refresher, but a concept card includes key terms, definitions, and examples for a cluster of ideas—  
- Review them regularly to save time and increase retention.  
- Make sure to read and understand the entire section surrounding a term before you make the card for it. |
| Summarize: Check your comprehension of the content and keep a record of what you read. | Highlight the big ideas and recall the key points.  
- A quick, one-paragraph summary of each section/sub-section is an effective way to:  
  - Keep a detailed log of your reading to refer back to when it is time to complete your assignment.  
  - Put content into your own words to help you process it and remember it. |
| Make Connections: Connect vocabulary terms, section headings, big ideas, important names, and concepts to each other and to relatable examples. | Understanding connections between content details and your own prior knowledge builds comprehension and increases retention.  
- Look back into the section you just read and categorize information.  
  - Connect the concepts presented in that section to the title of the chapter.  
  - Put vocabulary terms, scholars’ names, dates, theories, etc. together in a way that makes them more meaningful.  
  - Adapt the examples in the book or come up with your own examples that make the concepts meaningful to you. |
| Clarify: Assess what you still don’t understand in the reading and find a way to build that understanding. | Look outside of the book to answer additional questions or clarify any misunderstanding.  
- After you read:  
  - Ask your professor to clarify specific information before, during, or after class.  
  - Look up terms, references, or concepts that weren’t fully explained in the book.  
  - Ask a classmate for his/her take on the content. |
| Combine Notes: Gather a holistic picture of the content by relating your class notes to your reading notes. | Identify everything you need to know about a topic by connecting your class notes to your textbook.  
- After class, compare your lecture notes with the textbook and your reading notes.  
  - Focus on one topic at a time.  
  - Pay extra attention to points that were covered both in class and in the book—those are probably most important!  
  - Add material covered by your professor to your summaries or concept cards. |
| Explain It: Teach the material or explain it aloud in your own words. | Explaining material in your own words requires complete understanding.  
You’ll know you have mastered a new concept once you are able to fully explain it without referring to the book or your notes.  
- Use your notes, concept cards, visuals, or concept map as a guide and explain each idea aloud.  
  - You can teach the material to a friend, classmate, family member, a dog, a goldfish, or your favorite stuffed animal.  
- Monitor your ability to explain.  
  - If you get stuck, make a note of what part you were unable to recall (this is the part you’ll need to review before trying again). |