

Note-taking for Textbooks

How to read academic journals

Most university readings involve academic journals or textbooks where reading critically is needed to truly understand and engage with the reading.

Critical readings involve both analyzing and interpreting the information presented.

- o It additionally involves evaluating the main themes of the text and understanding how the texts created those themes.

	Reading	Critical reading
Purpose	Get a grasp of the basic text	Form judgement about how a text works
Activity	Absorbing and understanding	Analyzing, interpreting and evaluating
Focus	What the text says	What a text does and means
Questions	<p>What is the text saying?</p> <p>What info can I get from it?</p>	<p>How does the text work? How are the arguments structured?</p> <p>What choices are made in the text? What patterns are created as a result of those choices?</p> <p>What types of reasoning and evidence are used in the text?</p> <p>What are the underlying assumptions or perspectives of the text?</p> <p>What does the text mean? Does it communicate the meaning effectively?</p> <p>How can I use this text to develop my own arguments?</p>
Direction	"With" the text – taking for granted that the text is correct	"Against" the text – questioning the text's assumptions and arguments and interpreting the meaning of it in context
Response	Restatement and summary	Description, interpretation,

Skim the text: what's the topic? Main idea? Main points?

Resolve confusion: search any unfamiliar terms, reread any unclear paragraphs.

Digital vs. Printed Textbooks

There is often a divide over whether students prefer digital or printed textbooks.

Advantages of printed textbooks

Most people have grown up with printed textbooks – feel more comfortable and familiar with this format. Some studies suggest reading in print allows readers to absorb more information compared to e-textbooks.

There are typically less distractions with printed textbooks (no online alerts etc.).

Students can always refer back to highlighting and margin notes that aren't always available with e-textbooks only offered for limited times.

Advantages of digital textbooks	Disadvantages of digital textbooks
<p>Have convenience in reading since it's downloadable – content is available offline, viewable across multiple electronic devices</p> <p>Can contain interactive resources not found in printed educational materials (quizzes, videos etc.)</p> <p>More enhanced navigational tools – find information by using hyperlinks or use the search function to find key words/phrases</p> <p>Often cost cheaper compared to printed textbooks</p> <p>More portable compared to printed textbooks</p>	<p>Requires the use of an electronic device (e.g., PC, laptop, tablet) to access and view the content</p> <p>Greater physical and mental demands</p> <p>Can experience annoyance of scrolling through digital content and difficulty moving back and forth through digital pages</p> <p>Distracting social media alerts on the electronic device,</p> <p>A student's level of comprehension can be negatively impacted when content is presented in a digital format</p> <p>Some e-textbooks are only available for 1 semester</p>

Different note-taking layouts

What are Cornell notes?

Way of organizing and recording notes from textbooks

Why should I use it?

Recording comments, questions, or thoughts about information from your information

Summarizing the main ideas in your notes

Integrating notes from lectures and textbooks or readings

Studying your notes for tests and exams and testing your understanding

Steps:

Divide the page into three sections:

1. A large column on the right side of the page for lecture or text notes
Record your notes during the lecture as you normally would, and review after the class to add in any missed information
2. A smaller column on the left side of the page as the "cue" column
Record questions here based on the main ideas in the lecture notes
Test your understanding by covering the lecture notes and answering the questions in the cue column
3. A short row at the bottom of the page for a summary of the notes on that page

Tips for textbook readings:

Try this next time you're completing a reading.

Multiply the number of pages you need to read by 5 minutes – this is roughly how much time you should set aside for yourself

Divide the reading into about 10-page chunks

Have your supplies ready depending on your preference (highlighters, pens, notebook, notecards, sticky notes etc.)

When using coloured pens/highlighters – only be highlighting 15-25% of the text (The idea is that you could re-read JUST the highlighted portion in a month and get the gist of the paragraph without having to re-read the whole paragraph)

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Different tools for notetaking:

OneNote

- It is a free tool students can use across multiple devices to store and organize notes seamlessly.
- Offers the feature to organize notes into notebooks, sections and pages.
- Have the ability to annotate reading documents with keyboard, stylus or finger.
- Can incorporate a variety of media including audio notes, videos and photos.
- Can use tags to keep track of important material, to do's and more.

Cornell notes template

- Print these templates to try out the Cornell note-taking technique outlined in the panel to the left.
- Note down any questions, main title or vocab to the left.
- Note down any definitions, answers or examples to the right.
- Keep a running summary of each reading to help refresh your memory when studying.

Goodnotes5

- Many students are now moving to taking paperless notes – this app helps keeps notes all in one place.
- It has a variety of tools beneficial to keeping organized notes including features to annotate PDF's and other documents.

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