Using a Textbook

Reading the textbook for your class can be difficult. Many students struggle with focusing on the passages and retaining the information. It can also be hard to connect the reading in the textbook to the information presented in class. Follow these tips to improve your textbook reading skills, and remember that, like any skill, you will improve with practice!

Get to Know Your Textbook

At the beginning of the semester, you should:

- Browse the Table of Contents
- Look at the Index and Glossary
- See if there are answers in the back of the book
- Flip through a few chapters to get a feel for the writing style and layout

Reading a Chapter

When completing a reading assignment, follow these steps to break it down into manageable portions:

1. **Preview the chapter:** Flip through the entire reading assignment
2. **Skim** the first section in more detail: Look for bold/italicized words
3. **Read** the first section of the chapter:
   - Make notes in the margin, underline, or highlight
   - Take notes on your own paper as you read
4. **Repeat steps 2 and 3** for each section of the chapter.
5. **Review** as soon as you’re finished reading:
   - Tidy up your notes and summarize the section
   - Make notecards for important definitions or formulas
   - Connect what you read to the class: Which topics does your instructor focus on?

Taking Notes

- Write notes summarizing the portion of the textbook you have just read.
- Your own notes can be easier to review than re-reading the textbook.
- Good to do if renting/borrowing your textbook and don’t want to write in the pages.
- Make sure you note the **Chapter, Section, and pages** at the top of your notes.