

Guide to Reading Textbook Chapters

Reading and studying from a textbook can be cumbersome regardless of whether you are interested in the topic. There is often a lot of information to process and it can be overwhelming. The following tips will help ease the process and get you to retain the information better by interacting with the content and thinking conceptually rather than hoping it goes to memory. It can be particularly helpful to the ADHD mind because it keeps you engaged throughout the process.

Guide:

- Read the chapter summary first! This gives you the opportunity to familiarize yourself with the general content you're about to read and lays the foundation.
- Read the table of contents. This information is essential and offers a sequential outline of what is going to be discussed for this subject. The table of contents provides context, telling you where the chapter is going and where you are coming from.
- Read all of the headings in the chapter and be very conscious of when you are reading a subheading and then a subheading of a subheading. *For example, a geography textbook's **chapter heading** might be Canada. Canada's **subheading** might be Ontario whose **subheading** could be Ottawa.* This process allows you to understand the skeleton of the chapter so you can go deeper into the subject matter.
- Go back to the first major chapter heading and read all of the text. Now write a 1-3 sentence summary of what you have just read, picking out the major points.
- If the chapter heading covers more than 4 or 5 pages, then you may want to break it down and repeat the previous step for any subheadings. The purpose is to read in small chunks so that you don't get bored or overwhelmed. Just make sure you aren't reading more than about 4 or 5 pages before breaking to let the information integrate into conceptual thoughts.
- Continue to do this for all headings, as applicable, until you have completed the chapter and have made useful notes.
- Re-read the chapter summary to see if you understand all of the key points. If there is something you didn't remember reading or don't understand, go back to that section and review it.
- You have now just read an entire chapter and accumulated notes!



Additional Tips:

- Consider purchasing study guides that accompany textbooks. They usually contain practice questions, support material, tips, etc. Do the practice questions and self-tests and read the tips and refer to the support material as suggested. This is especially useful for subjects you might struggle with.
- Understand the format for tests and focus on those types of practice questions in your study guide e.g., essay-style vs. multiple-choice.
- Read in a quiet location with as few distractions as possible.

Reading textbooks in this manner will help you stay focused on the material by breaking it up into manageable chunks. Forcing yourself to read through 100 or so pages without a break is a breeding ground for distractions. This strategy may take longer, but in the end you will find it to be more efficient and you will actually retain the information. Remember, there can be no knowledge without retention.
