

Textbook Guidelines

This is a highly suggested way to read the textbook. I realize that some of the things I suggest will seem to be repetitious and unnecessary, but the following steps will help to truly **understand** the text. You should modify the suggestions to meet your needs or style of learning. After you have tried this you feel that you are still having problems, talk to me. Together we should be able to figure something out. Do not wait until the last minute or until your grade is an F! Talk to me when you see the beginnings of a problem.

History books tend to be written in outline form (like a big essay): **thesis, main heading, sub-headings, topic sentences, and main points.**

By using this information, you can quickly look at what the chapter has to offer before you read, giving you a better chance of remembering some of the important ideas. What you want to do is activate your background knowledge and keep new information fresh. You can do this by referring to the text over a period of days.

DO NOT try to consume a whole chapter or a long reading the night before it is due! The times below are only suggestions. You will need to adjust or create a schedule that fits you.

1. Browsing

Look through the chapter. Read the headings of the chapter, sections, and sub sections. Read and look at all the maps, drawings, paintings, and charts. Just “look around” at what you will be reading. Do not read the chapter/section at this point, just look. (15-20 minutes)

2. Skim-and-Scan

Read the opening remarks of the chapter/section. Read the first paragraphs of each section and subsection. Find the thesis for the chapter and section. Read the first sentence of every other paragraph. Read the captions to the maps, graphs, etc. That is all. (30-45 minutes)

3. Careful reading

Now read the section from start to finish. Carefully read every sentence and word. **DO NOT TAKE NOTES WHILE READING.** Be sure to spend time reading the whole section. I recommend you do this in one, but not more than two sessions. (1-3 hours)

4. Skim-and-Scan with Note-taking

With pen in hand, skim and scan again. Take Cornell Notes in outline style with the headings matching those in the chapter/section. **DO NOT REWRITE THE BOOK.** Take quick notes of things you will need to remember. Jot down page numbers of important passages or paragraphs. Synthesize the information. (1 hour)

5. Reminding

This is a skim-and-scan technique that uses both the text and your notes. Let the notes remind you what is in the text, referring only to the text when you need to. This is a final check before you study for “learning opportunities”. (30-45 minutes)

Train yourself to rely on good notes that reflect the important parts of the text that focus on the main idea or thesis.

After you have received the test back, go over the questions and answers. Check your notes. Why did you miss this question? What should you do to change your reading or notes to better prepare for the test? What worked and what did not work? Do this after every test. By concentrating on your test taking habits early you will be prepared for the time when you will be tested over a greater amount of material.

Don't forget: don't give up! Always search for ways to better yourself and your techniques!