

READING DIFFERENT TYPES OF COURSE MATERIAL

DIFFERENT TYPES OF COURSE READING DEMAND DIFFERENT APPROACHES, BUT ALL REQUIRE THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

1. Preview the material to get an idea of what you are reading before you read it
2. Train yourself to find and focus on the most important information
3. After, summarize **briefly in your own words** what you have read

TIPS FOR SPECIFIC TYPES OF READING:

NOVELS

- Create a context for yourself by finding out a bit about the author first, online—
- When were they writing, how well known are they, what else have they written?
- Focus on the novel's intro and preface to get idea of content
- If necessary, create a grid to briefly pick out and note down main points of chapters as you read.
e.g.

GRID FOR NOVEL *THE STONE ANGEL*

Chapter	Major events— plot development	Characters Introduced	Themes	Descriptive passages	Etc. Make up your own columns depending on what your book is like
1	Setting the scene	Hagar Doris Marvin	Tensions in family	Memories: Stone angel statue Early family life	
2	-Newspaper ad. about age home -Argument	Minister Mr. Troy	Hagar's health problems	Memories -Brother Mat and college -Brampton Shipley	

PHILOSOPHY READINGS

- Read intro and conclusion
- Skim first sentence of each paragraph to get a sense of how the argument or theory is developing
- If it's really heavy going, google the text to find a simple summary of what it says; this is not to replace reading it but, instead, to give you hints about what it is saying and how to interpret the text

COURSE PACKS

- Match article/readings' titles with the course outline so that you can figure out which section or articles in the course pack cover which general topic
- Make your own table of contents if there isn't one, using your course outline to guide you
- Note where each article/text comes from--write this context at the top of the page of the article. This will help you work out what you are reading, and why
- Think about why your professor included each reading in the pack —what purpose does each serve?

ARTICLES:

focus on

- Abstract
- Intro & conclusion
- Headings – you could make a map if there are major and minor headings.

Article on the life of Buddha				
Early life	Great Renunciation	Awakening	Mission	Last Days
-Birth -Youth -4 sights	- Spiritual teachers - Asceticism	-Enlightenment -Nirvana	-3 refuges -Important conversions -Monasticism -Social Concern	

PROBLEM SOLVING COURSES

- Read in small sections/chunks and practice related problems **immediately** after finishing each chunk (find the problems in the “practice questions” section at the end of each chapter)
- Then return to the body of the chapter and work through the next problem example. Once you feel you know how to do it, try a practice question, and so on

GUIDELINES FOR READING REALLY DIFFICULT TEXTS

Not all writing is easy to read: some ideas are so complex that there is no simple way to express them. Sometimes ideas are written in archaic forms of English with uncommon vocabulary. And, some texts are just poorly written—vague, unclear, unnecessarily wordy or rambling. When faced with this type of course reading, here are some more things to try. In addition to previewing the text, try to focus on the important parts, and summarize what it says briefly in your own words after.

- **GET A SENSE OF THE CONTEXT**

Who wrote it, and why?

- **LOOK FOR CLUES AS YOU READ**

Locate the most important words in a sentence—often they will be nouns.

Look for signal words like however, because, if—then, therefore. These words show how the writer is connecting the ideas in a sentence. Circle such words to make them stand out.

- **REPHRASE THINGS TO MAKE THEM EASIER TO UNDERSTAND**

Tell yourself the meaning of a sentence out loud to in order to help you figure out the connections between ideas. In your retelling, turn passive statements into active statements in order to sort out who is doing what to whom. In other words, instead of trying to work with a sentence like, “The experiment was attempted by Descartes”, read it as “Descartes attempted the experiment”.

- **IF YOU GET LOST, READ ON FURTHER; DON'T GO BACK!**

Instead of automatically re-reading a difficult paragraph, force yourself to move on—read to the end of the section. Reading further may help you pick up more context clues and ideas about the difficult part.

- **TAKE A BREAK**

This type of reading is challenging—if you find it hard to keep reading for longer than 30 minutes, don't be surprised. It takes a lot of concentration and high level thinking. Take a break and then try again later.

- **BRIEFLY SUMMARIZE WHAT YOU READ** so that you remember next time you look at it and don't have to reread it!