

Strategies for Reading Difficult Texts

- **Do not read too much in one sitting** – break up long texts into manageable sections
- **Scan the section**
 - Pay attention to titles, headings, sub-headings, and topic sentences
 - Pay attention to graphs, charts, and diagrams
 - Check the beginning and the end for leading questions and exercises
 - *Read the summary at the end of the chapter*
- **Read first for what you do understand**
 - Mark what you do not understand to review later
- **Take notes as you read**
 - Write questions and comments in the margin, especially next to confusing passages
 - Highlight important points, terms, and concepts
 - Highlight connections among ideas
- **As you read, practice the "look-away method:"**
 - Periodically look away from the text and ask yourself a question relating to the text
 - Phrase the question positively!
 - Write it down in the margin or in a notebook.
 - Answer it in your own words and write the answer down.
- **Look up words that you don't understand**
 - Make a list in a notebook
 - Highlight them in the book
- **Read to the end**
 - Do not get discouraged and stop reading.
 - The general idea of a reading can become clearer as you get closer to the end.
- **Organize your notes after you finish reading**
 - Create an organized list of questions and answers
 - Create an organized list of words and definitions
 - Create a "map" or "spider-web" of ideas and concepts
 - Pay attention to relationships between ideas.
- **Do not limit your notes to words!**
 - Use representations, graphics, pictures, colors, and arrows to visualize and connect ideas. Use whatever techniques work to help you understand.
- **If you do not understand your reading, do not panic!**
 - Set it aside for the next day. This allows you to process the material, even while you sleep.
 - Re-read the text with your notes in mind.
- **Separate out what you *do* understand from what you *do not*.**
 - Focus on re-reading what you did not understand the first (or even second) time.
- **If the reading is still a challenge, consult with your teacher, classmates, or a Writing Center tutor.**