HOW TO READ A TEXTBOOK

Dr. Helen Eckmann

First, realize that reading a text book is not like reading a novel. You do not start at page one and end at the last page.

Get a pen that has a good smell (no kidding) and a few color options. You can color code your comments or just mix up the colors as you go through the text to keep yourself interested. Then:

1. Look over the syllabus for the textbook's course
   a. Go to the Learning Outcomes for the Course
   b. Highlight the key words and concepts in the Learning Outcomes
   c. Go to each of the assignments for the course
   d. Highlight the key words and concepts in the assignments.
   e. Write down on a separate sheet of paper the key words
      (from b & c above)

2. Go to the Index for the text
   a. Find the page numbers for each of the key words (from b & c above)
   b. Write down the page numbers on your sheet of paper.
   c. Go to the text and highlight the pages where the key words are in the text.

3. Go to the Table of Contents
   a. Find the Chapters where the key words are located.
   b. Within the text highlight the Chapters that apply to the key words.

4. Spend some time on the Table of Contents
   a. Look for the "sound bite" of each of the Chapters.
   b. See if any of the Chapters have particular meaning for your papers or for your project. Make notations in the Table of Contents like, "Project" or "Paper 4."

5. Read the assigned Chapter(s)
   a. Take no longer than 45 minutes a Chapter (or you will just get bored).
   b. Make comments in the margins for any pertinent information for your papers, discussion threads, your work at your job or for the project.

HOW TO READ A TEXTBOOK

    c. At the end of the Chapter write down a few thoughts you have that summarize the Chapter. Like, "Applies exactly to what I was doing at my job two years ago, best stuff is on Page 8 having to do with value analysis."

Why this Matters:

This process will improve your retention. If you will make yourself do this with two of your text books you will cut your reading time in half while doubling your retention. If this doesn't work the beer is on me.