

Deciphering Your Textbook: Tips for Taking Notes

Moorpark College Writing Center

Survey/Skim: Pay attention to Course objectives, title of textbook, table of contents, chapter titles, subheadings, and if present “Key Terms”, “Chapter Objectives”, “Chapter Summary”.

For dense paragraphs, try *not* reading every single word. Allow your eyes to focus on the nouns verbs, adjectives and adverbs that carry the essence of the passage. For some subjects, hone in on numbers that might signal data that demands your attention.

Question: *Turn statements into questions.* This allows your mind to locate the answer and eliminate unimportant information.

Read “with a pen”: Read for clear and specific understanding of Main idea. **While reading, write:**

- Stop after each paragraph or section
- Write the main idea and any important supporting details in the margin (or on a post-it)
- Write any thoughts you had associated with that section’s concepts

Transform margin annotations:

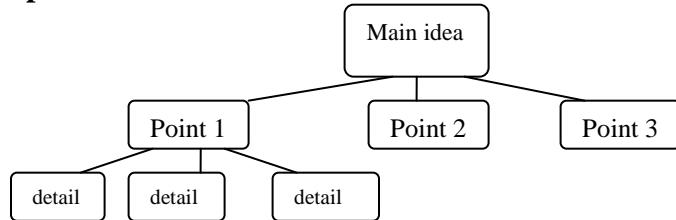
Option 1: Create a **reading log**. Here is an example of one format

Quote from text	Main point or concept	Analysis/meaning	Connections	Questions

Option 2: Use your margin notes to create an **outline**. Example:

- I. Main Idea
 - A. First Key Point
 - B. Second Key Point (etc)
 - 1. First Supporting Detail
 - 2. Second Supporting Detail (etc)

Option 3: Make a mental or pictorial **map or flow chart**



Recall: Close the book.

- Mentally see the **headings** from the page
- Imagine the **maps** you had made in your mind
- Think about the **logic** of the ideas:
 - **What are the connections?**
 - **In what way do two or more main ideas fit together?**
 - **How do they fit with previous chapters?**

Review:

- Re-read your notes. Do they make sense? If not, **check your notes** against the text.
- **Talk about it.** Discuss what you have read with someone.
- Use what you have learned in a **real life** context
- **Turn your notes into questions**—create your own practice test.