

Reading Tough Material

Utilize the following strategies to tackle difficult reading material.

Read it again This is not always a waste of time, especially with highly technical writing as found in the sciences. After reading, leave it alone; allow your mind to work over the concepts.

Look for essential words If you are stuck on a paragraph, mentally cross out all the adjectives and adverbs, and read the sentence without them. Find the important words. These will usually be the nouns and verbs.

Hold a mini-review Stop at the end of each paragraph and recite, in your own words, what you have read. Or write a short summary. This can be written in the margin of your text.

Read it aloud Make some noise. This slows you down, but speed isn't necessary when reading difficult material.

Use your instructor Admit when you are absolutely stuck and make an appointment with your instructor. Instructors want to talk to you. Be specific about your confusion. Point out the specific section of the text.

Find a tutor Tutors can give you a new perspective on a problem. The tutor has taken the course and has a basic understanding of the material.

Use an alternate text Find one in the library. Sometimes the same concept can be understood better if you find it expressed in another way. Try a children's encyclopedia. These provide a useful overview of subjects.

Pretend you understand, then explain it More often than not we underestimate ourselves. We often understand more than we think we do. Write out your explanation. Explain the concept to your tutor. Getting the information out of your head and on to paper, or out into the air for others to hear; helps you to clarify the concepts. It is also an opportunity to confirm your understanding.

Stand up Changing positions periodically can combat fatigue. Stand while you read an especially difficult section. For some people, getting up on their feet works wonders.