

An Algebra Students' Guide to Reading and Taking Notes from the Textbook

Keep a Positive Attitude

1. Expect mathematics reading to take time.
2. It is normal to *not* understand some concepts the first time you read about them.
3. The most difficult concepts may turn out to be the most powerful and valuable. It is worth the effort to keep trying.
4. Don't let yourself feel discouraged. Remember that you have mastered concepts that seemed impossible at first. You can do that again!

When you begin a new algebra unit

1. Read the chapter topic and the lesson titles in the table of contents.
2. On the first page of the chapter, locate and read the *What You'll Learn* list which provides the objectives for each lesson.
3. Read *Why It's Important* so you can understand the big picture of the unit.
4. Use your unit plan to match the lessons in the book.
5. Use the *Prerequisite Skills* section to practice review problems.

Before you begin to read a new lesson

1. **Copy** the title of the lesson and *What You'll Learn* on your *Cornell* notepaper.
2. Read the vocabulary words and highlight any vocabulary words that are on your vocabulary sheet.
3. Preview the lesson by looking through the pages to get an idea of the content. Notice if the pages contain mostly numbers, graphs, equations or geometric figures.
4. Notice the important items that are highlighted in colored text, boxed text, large or bold fonts and color blocks or bars.
5. Think about what you already know about this topic.

As you read a new lesson

1. Read slowly. Read each word and pause to monitor your understanding of each statement.
2. Read actively. As you read each statement ask yourself if it makes sense to you. When you do not understand, stop and reread.
3. Reread definitions and explanations. **Write** new definitions in your notes and on your vocabulary sheet.
4. Look for key words. They are highlighted in yellow in your text
5. Reread key concepts and record them on your paper
6. Make a special note of the *Study Tips* shown in the margins.

After you read the lesson

1. Work examples with pencil and paper. Reading math means *doing* math – with a pencil, paper and calculator.
2. Use the examples in the textbook. Slowly read one line of the example and ask yourself if you understand the step and agree with the reason given for that step. If you understand, go to the next step, otherwise reread.
3. Try doing the example without looking at the answer.

