

Reading Effectively for the Sciences

Do you have trouble understanding the material in your science books? Are you struggling to decipher unfamiliar words and charts? Here are a few tips that might help you along your path.

Stop Often

The best way to understand a text is to stop frequently and think about what the author is saying. This will help in your general understanding of ideas.

Understand the Terms

Look up the unfamiliar words in the glossary, index, online, or in a science dictionary so that you don't miss any of the author's points.

Understand What You're Reading

Stop and smell the scientific roses! Look at the photos, read the boxes. Try to understand what the charts and graphs are telling you. They are there for a reason, and understanding them may help you understand what the author is saying.

Take Notes

Another good idea is to take notes while you read. Sometimes it's as simple as highlighting and making notes in the margins. This forces you to actively participate in the reading. If this isn't enough, jotting down important points on a piece of paper will also help you read actively and give you something to study later on.

The information cited in this handout comes from geology.com's Reading Science for Comprehension website: <http://geology.com/articles/reading-science.shtml>.

Additional information is available online at Chemistry Coach's Links to a Better Education website: <http://www.chemistrycoach.com/lbe3.htm>.

The Fred Meijer Center for Writing also has genre guides for writing in the sciences. Please see <http://gvsu.edu/wc/writing-in-your-major-49.htm> for more information.