



Literacy at Hartford Public High School

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Reading a Science Text

from Reader's Handbook, Great Source

A science textbook can seem very intimidating at first. As you glance through it, you see many new and difficult words that you might be able to pronounce. But if you have trouble reading a science text, you need a plan and some effective strategies.

Before you begin to read, think about what you already know about the subject. Make predictions about what might be in the chapter. Form a plan for finding out more information.

One way to set a purpose for what you read is to examine the title or the main heading of the chapter you have been assigned. Turn the title into a question; then, as you read, you will attempt to answer the question. Another good idea is to check the first page of a chapter to see if it includes a list of objectives or goals. If it does, you can use this information to set your purpose for reading. You can also set your purpose based on a subheading or on key terms listed on the first page.

Now that you've determined your purpose, you need to preview this part of the text. This will give you an idea of what to expect before you begin reading. Pay especial attention to the following:

- The title, any list of terms and names, and any introductory information near the title;
- The first and last paragraphs;
- The headings;
- Any names, dates, words, or terms set in bold type or that are repeated;
- Any boxed lists;
- Any photos, maps, or pictures and their captions; and
- The list of objectives and any review questions.

Now, stop and think about what you have learned in the preview. These broad ideas can help you as you begin to read the text carefully.

One excellent strategy to use when reading a science textbook is **outlining**. You can do a topic outline or a sentence outline. You can use a formal or an informal method. An informal outline might use simple indentations and bullets to show how ideas relate to one another. A formal outline might look like this:

- Title of Outline
- I. _____
 - A. _____
 1. _____
 2. _____
 - B. _____
 - II. _____

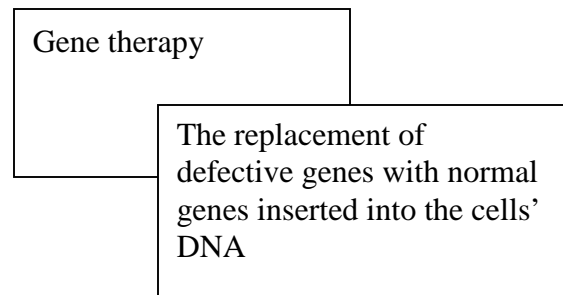
As you read, you should make sure to use the various **headings** as a guide to create an effective outline. An outline helps you to understand the organization of a text. You can start your outline with just the headings; later, you can go back and fill in the sublevels as you read the paragraphs. A sample outline of this sort might look like this for a biology book:

Biology in the World

- I. Biology Can Help Solve Today's Real-World Problems
 - A. Living in harmony with our environment
 1. _____
 2. _____
 - B. Feeding a growing population
 1. _____
 2. _____
- II. Biology Can Help Fight Diseases
 - A. AIDS
 1. _____
 2. _____
 - B. Cancer
 1. _____
 2. _____

If you follow this example, you will have a clear record of the key points of the chapter.

Note-taking on **study cards** is also an effective way to help you learn and remember important points and key terms. You can use the study cards in study groups and when you are preparing for a quiz or test. Put your notes on an index card. On one side, write the key word or term; on the other side, write the definition or explanation.



Using **study cards** with note-taking will help you gather a lot of terms and details as you reread the text. Create your own **practice test** by using your outlines and study cards to generate questions that you must answer.