

## Reading and Using Digital Textbooks

In many of your classes you no longer buy a hard copy textbook. Instead, you have a digital textbook that you access online. By using digital texts effectively, you will be able to learn your course content successfully and utilize digital skills that will benefit you in your courses and career path.

### Develop Your Strategy in Four Steps

1. Choose your textbook format and device (that will work best for you),
2. Analyze your textbook features,
3. Develop a strategy for taking notes,
4. Plan to avoid distractions.

### Choose Your Textbook Format and Device

Many of your digital texts are open texts that are freely available to you in a number of formats. You may choose to download the whole textbook as a PDF file or Word document, or to read the textbook online. If you prefer to have a paper copy of the text, you can arrange to order a print copy from the KPU bookstore. Make your decision before the end of the first week of class.

Next, consider what devices you have available for reading or taking notes. You can read these texts on your phone. However, small devices can be difficult to use for study. A tablet may be a worthwhile investment. Or, a laptop or desktop computer might be your reading device of choice. If you are unsure of where you can find a device that meets your needs ask your Instructor or a Learning Strategist to help you find a device that will help you read and study effectively.

### Analyze your Textbook Features

One advantage of digital texts is that they often include additional exercises, videos, and interactive content that can make your learning more interesting and effective. Explore your textbook to discover how you will use it. See if your textbook has the following features:

Textbook Feature	How this Feature Supports Study
Learning Objectives	Gives you a clear picture of the important things you are expected to learn by engaging with this chapter. Keep track of these objectives to ensure that you meet each one.
Chapter Summaries	Provide an overview of the most important points. (Helpful hint: read this as a part of your chapter exploration before you return to the beginning of the chapter and read in depth). These are often located near the end of the chapter.
Glossaries	These provide the meaning of key words; you may find them at the end of a chapter, at the end of the book, or along the side of the page. In some digital texts, you may be able to click on a word to find its meaning. You may also be able to right click on a word in your internet browser to find its meaning.
Interactive Exercises	In many digital texts, you will find the opportunity to complete exercises as you read. These exercises will help you to confirm whether you have understood the content, or if you still have more learning to do.

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Videos	Many students find that videos help to clarify key concepts from the course. If your textbook includes videos, watching these will support what you learn from reading.
Links	Your textbook might include links to other articles or websites that help you understand your topic more deeply or make connections. Use the links that look relevant to your reading goals, and be sure to stay focused on your reading purpose.

### Develop a Strategy for Taking Notes

How do you take notes when your textbook is online? Online can offer some advantages when it comes to notetaking, but you will need to spend a small amount of time finding a tool that is effective for you. Here are some possibilities:

- **OneNote:** OneNote is part of the Office 365 package freely available to KPU students. In OneNote, you can create a note page for your chapter. You may copy the chapter into your note as a PDF, or copy and paste key points from the chapter. After you have put the chapter content into OneNote, you can create your personal notes on the same page. Add questions, and summarize key points.
- **Hypothes.is:** Hypothes.is is a free tool that allows you to highlight and annotate any text that is online. It works as an extension within your internet browser. More information on the Hypothes.is website here: <https://web.hypothes.is>
- **Adobe Acrobat Reader:** Adobe Acrobat is a free tool (already installed on many computers) that you can use to read, annotate, and highlight PDFs. You can click on any part of the PDF file, and add your own brief notes. You can find a tutorial for each of these tools on the Learning Centre website.

Whichever tool that you use, it is important that you take time to make notes on your online texts. Writing a short summary after each page or section is an effective way to retain content as you read.

### Plan to Avoid Distraction

One drawback of digital texts is the temptation to be distracted by the web or social media. Here are some strategies you might consider:

- **Set a timer** for 25-30 minutes, and make a commitment to focus on your text until the time ends. Take a short break, and then begin another timed reading period. After 3-4 short study periods, take a longer break.
- **Use a tool to prevent distraction.** Search the web or your device's app store for a tool that allows you to block specific websites and apps for a set period of time. These tools will block access to anything that might distract you until your work period is done.

Learning to use digital texts may require a small time investment in selecting and learning tools for reading and notetaking in a digital environment. Once you have made this investment, you will be able to access all that your digital text has to offer, while gaining some skills that you will use for a lifetime of managing online information.

### References:

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