

Reading a Math Textbook

It can be challenging to read a math textbook since it is quite different from reading a novel or any other book. Here are a few tips that can help you understand the material better.

1. Read the examples given at the beginning of each exercise. Follow the steps closely- one cannot skim through diagrams/ problem steps in math.
2. Once again, slow down your pace if you do not understand a step. It is better to go back one step than skim through 5 example problems and not be able to solve the exercise questions.
3. Understand each sentence before you go on to the next.
4. Re-draw the diagram in the example problems since it is possible that the diagram will not be provided on the homework/ test questions.
5. While solving problems, read each word and symbol in the question. Remember- every word counts.
6. Write as you read the problem. You will find it easier to solve the problem if you have this information jotted down on a page:
 - a. The knows and unknowns
 - b. The formulas, definitions that can be used to get to the answer
 - c. Page number of a similar sample problem or the page number where the concept was explained

It can also be beneficial to note down questions on concepts you need to have clarified from your teacher, TA, tutor or friends.

7. Feel free to make note cards with formulas, properties and facts.
8. Think of the application of the concept in real life if you are having trouble understanding the concept. Use other books/ online resources to help you understand the material better.
9. Read the chapter before and after class. You will find it very useful to have read the material before the instructor presents it in class and also a good review for your memory if you read the chapter after class.