Reading College Textbooks

Before you Read:

1. Choose a time and a place for reading that is best for you. Read at times when you are most awake and attentive and select a location with a minimum of distractions.
2. Ask yourself what you already know about the material.
3. Survey your reading. Look at the titles and subtitles, pictures and words in bold print. Doing this is like warming up before you exercise. It prepares your mind for the exercise of reading.
4. Have a purpose for reading. Use the titles and subtitles to create questions and/or look over the questions at the end of the section.

During Reading:

1. Look for answers to the questions you created or those provided in the book.
2. Stop at the end of each paragraph/section and ask yourself what was most important. Annotate your text or take notes on these important points and details.
3. Use context clues to determine meanings of unknown words instead of stopping to look them up.
4. Vary your reading speed and/or re-read difficult text. Try putting this text in your own words.
5. Look for patterns of organization as you read and use these patterns to take notes. (Patterns of organization include listing, sequence of events, compare and/or contrast, definition and examples, and cause and effect).
6. Use patterns of organization to help you anticipate test questions.
7. Interact with your text! Ask questions and relate it to your own life and experience.
8. Be aware of when your mind begins to wander. Make a tic mark on a piece of scratch paper every time you lose focus. Being aware that you are not concentrating can help you concentrate!
9. Take breaks! Every 30 minutes (or less if necessary) stop and rest.

After Reading:

1. Test yourself by trying to answer the question you established before you read. If you can’t answer them, re-read.
2. Reflect on your reading. What did you learn? What would you still like to know?

Additional Strategies:

1. Get familiar with your textbook. Look at the chapter titles, glossary, appendices, etc. Know what all your book has to offer you.
2. Read the textbook material BEFORE class. This will allow you to better understand the classroom material and aid in your note taking.
3. Review the material often! Review within 24 hours then at least 3 times per week, every week.
4. Get outside help if needed. Google your topic, ask your teacher or tutor or study with friends.