

# READING AN INFORMATIONAL TEXT

By Glen Foss, Adjunct Instructor, Palomar College

First impressions are the most lasting (with printed material as well as with people). It is a common mistake to approach reading an informational textbook as we would an adventure or romantic novel. That approach does not work well for most people because an informational text is not organized that way. Instead, try pre-reading the assigned chapter(s) using these seven steps as outlined by Mr. Stan Levy of Palomar's Reading Center:

- Review the Table of Contents.
- Read the introduction to the chapter or the first three to five paragraphs on the first page of the chapter.
- Read the topic sentence for every remaining paragraph in the chapter or the subtitles.
- On the last page of the chapter, read the chapter summary.
- Ask and answer to yourself, "What is my purpose in going back and reading the chapter thoroughly?"
- Ask and write down, "What were some of the chapter main ideas?"
- Ask and write down, "What were some of the chapter conclusions?"

If you can't write down five or six main ideas and conclusions, it might be a good idea to pre-read a second time before your "thorough" reading of the chapter. After the pre-reading, the material should fit together better and not be an "information overload."

Some other tips that may seem like just common sense but are sometimes overlooked:

- Don't do your reading when you are tired or distracted.
- Break up your reading into manageable sections. Don't save it all until the last minute.
- Take a break if your concentration begins to fade. Listen to music, call a friend, or have a snack. Then return to your reading.
- Some of the above may require a re-examination of priorities. If your school work is what you do after everything else is taken care of, that will be reflected in your grades.

We all have known people who apparently could scan a reading assignment or sleep with it under their pillows and then excel on the tests. Those people are now somewhere in four-year institutions on full-ride scholarships, not here at Palomar. Our courses are designed for normal human beings who can have an excellent learning outcome if they have the motivation and study skills. Remember that being a successful student is hard work; it is not something one does in his/her spare time.