

How well do you read? By this I don't mean, "Can you form the words and generally follow what the writer is saying?" You may be able to read a novel by just running from word to word, but technical texts are different. To read them requires an active approach. One such approach is called "talking to the text".

To talk to the text, you need a notepad and a pencil or pen as well as the text, and access to a good dictionary. I suggest the Merriam-Webster unabridged. However, just having an English dictionary isn't always enough, since in Computer Science (and in science, math and engineering in general) many terms have technical meanings quite different from their normal English usage.

First, set up a three column table. The columns are "What's important", "Questions, predictions and observations on what I read" and "answers to questions". As you read, write the main points from the text in the first column as you find them. Then pause, thinking about what you just wrote. Ask yourself, "What did that mean?" If you think you understand and can expand on what you read, add that as an observation. If you don't understand, write that as a question. Here you include terms you might not know, or know in this context. If you can find the answer (it's often a few sentences later in the text), or have to look it up, write the answer to the question in the third column. In either case, think about what the writer may be intending to do next and add that to the second column. When you find out if you were right (or more importantly, wrong), note that in the third column, too. There is more room in this table on the back of the page.

Your lab is to talk to the text for chapter one, using this table for your notes. The table continues on the back of the page.

What's important	Questions, predictions and observations on what I read	Answers to questions

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