Using Your Textbook

When you purchase a new book, there are several things you should do automatically.

I. Look in the front:

A. **Read** and think about the table of contents.
1. This will show you the overall organization of the course and help identify what's important.
2. It will get you interested in the material.

B. Glance over any preface or foreword to see what the book is trying to do.

C. Consider the title. This is often a significant statement about the book's "slant." Do you know the author?

II. Look in the back:

A. Glance at the index. This is a listing of subject and pages upon which they can be found.
1. You can tell from the percentage of known and unknown words how difficult the text will be for you.
2. You can see with great precision what the course is concerned with.
3. You can look up specific items of interest.
4. As a review for tests, you can easily look up unknown items since the page number is given.

B. Is there a glossary listing unknown words and their definitions?
1. The main concern of many courses is to teach the vocabulary of the subject. This is a vital section, not something to be ignored.
2. Make a page tab out of scotch tape, and undertake to study and learn these words during the term. Use the tab for easy reference during time between classes-time which might otherwise be wasted.

C. Determine what other possibly useful materials are in the back-**before** you need them. You don't have to read them now; just know that they exist .

III. Determine how a typical chapter is constructed. (All of the other chapters will be put together the same way. If one chapter has a summary, they all will; if one chapter has questions, they all will.) Use this knowledge when you have a reading assignment. Structure your approach accordingly.

IV. Don't be afraid to write in your book-vocabulary words, condensations of ideas, personal reactions, etc. Interact with the book the way you'd interact with a person. Your texts provide a valuable resource during and after your academic career.