

# Reading Philosophical Texts

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# General

- Find the texts you want to read: articles, books, chapters of books (also: internet blogs and forums). Look for the texts through which you learn most
  - because they contain much insight, or
  - because they are a good model for philosophy
- If you find a text from which you can learn much, spend much time with it.

# Philosophy answers questions

- First of all:
  - Find the question of the text
  - Find the answer which the text gives (i.e. the main thesis)
  - For this read the abstract, the first paragraphs, the last paragraphs, the back of the book, reviews.
- Likewise, for every paragraph and for every sentence, find question and answer.
- Read the text as one who wants to find the answer. Not as one who only or mainly wants to investigate the mind of the author.

# Take notes

- While you read, take notes.
  - Use a text processor or other software (e.g. Evernote)
  - Create a template for your notes
  - One file for each article or for a group of articles
  - Give the file an informative name, starting with the surname of the author, e.g. Smith\_2003.odt
- What to write down:
  - Central claims and arguments to memorise
  - Things you want to find again (with page number, for references)
- Draw diagrams

... Take notes

Learn touch typing!

# Mark the text

- with pencil or textmarkers
  - draw connections
  - mark key words and sentences

# The most important technique

- After reading something, explain it to a real or imagined friend.
  - If it is a claim, start with a question: "...? The answer is: ..."
  - If it is an argument, start with "What reason is there for assuming X?", then give the argument.
- Use

# Learn speed reading

- Look in the internet for “speed reading”
- Change the speed of your reading from sentence to sentence.
- Train concentration (also look for advise on this)



# Use bibliography software

- Zotero (add on for Firefox)
- Jabref (Bibtex format)
- You can also store notes with these programs, either as text or as files

## Read also

- <http://ratschlaege.von-wachter.de>
- <http://von-wachter.de/lehre/writing.htm> (also on marking)
- <http://tips.von-wachter.de>
- <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html>

The background features a complex geometric design. A large, dark green triangle points downwards from the top center. To its left, a yellow vertical bar is partially visible. The overall composition is abstract and modern.

# Libraries, Databases, Internet Resources

- <http://tips.von-wachter.de> (English at the bottom)

# How to find a certain book

# How to find a certain article

# How to find texts on a certain subject

- Philosophers' Index
- <http://philpapers.org>
- <http://plato.stanford.edu> SEP