

As you read the assignment, compose a class website forum post. In it, you should include two sets of content.

First, note any difficulties you have with the reading and record the location of the problem as specifically as possible (Ex: p.74, para 3). As you are reading, if you cannot figure out what is wrong, note that too! If a later passage clears up a point, note that too in your comments. Do not delete anything; the original comment on the confusing spot and the later comment along the lines of 'Oh, now I see/know why . . .', are both useful – for they demonstrate that the material is in a confusing order. At the end of the reading, note general difficulties that you have and questions that you would like answered.

Second, record your general thoughts about what you read. For example, you could write down realizations you had from the reading. Your impressions of the author's biases and background. Connections to other reading or content in this class.

Do not revise your notes; it is important that they be spontaneous, written down at the very minute you are reading and wondering about a point. If you do not understand an equation, derivation, or passage, it is the fault of the author. Help us pinpoint where the writing fall short. Your comments will help to improve the class and your knowledge of the other students in the class.

Reading reactions help you practice reading critically, with attention, and with a questioning attitude. These skills are useful for your entire life and help you participate in your own learning.

Reading memos reverse the normal teacher–student hierarchy. For contrast, consider problem sets. If a problem cannot be solved, one can feel incapable and defeated. With a reading memo, when you do not understand a thesis or follow an argument you have found a problem. You are the expert.

**Use the reading memos as a way to practice reading technical material, to formulate questions, to give feedback to the instructors and authors, and to think critically.**

*Adapted from Sanjoy Mahajan, 'Reading Memos', MIT 5.95 Course Material and Edwin F. Taylor, 'Guest comment: Only the student knows', American Journal of Physics 60(3):201–202 (March 1992).*

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EC.711 D-Lab: Energy  
Spring 2011

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