How To Read University Texts or Journal Articles

Choose a section preferably not longer than 25 or 30 pages – perhaps one chapter, or a section of a chapter – that you can handle at one sitting.

Step 1.
Read the title, the introduction, and the conclusion (5 minutes).

Step 2.
Read the title, the introduction again, all sub-headings, and the conclusion, again (5-10 minutes).

Step 3.
Read the title, the introduction one more time, sub-headings, the Topic Sentence of each paragraph – usually the first or second sentence, (you may read the last sentence as well, if you have time), any italicized or boldfaced words, lists (you can skim these), and the conclusion (10 minutes). *(Force yourself to do steps 1 to 3 in less than 25 minutes.)*

Step 4.
Close your textbook.

Step 5.
Write out all you can remember of the chapter. Do not stop until at least half an hour is up, even if you feel that you can't possibly remember any more--more will surface if you give yourself the time. DO NOT REFER TO THE TEXT WHILE YOU ARE DOING THIS. If you come to a dead end, try alternative memory techniques to the ones you have been using: associating ideas, either from within the section itself or from other related material; visualizing pages, pictures, graphs etc.; recalling personal associations that may have come to mind; staring out the window and blanking out your thoughts; and so on. This is strenuous, but it is rewarding. It will show you exactly how much you have learned of what you have read. Give yourself a lot of time to do this, and you will probably be surprised at how much you actually can recall, and at how you can use all sorts of different strategies for remembering. You should also be noting down questions about things you have forgotten, so you can look them up.
When you are finished, you should try to figure out how all the material you have remembered fits together – not necessarily as it is presented in the book, but as it is organized in your own thinking. Note down your opinions of it, questions about it, disagreements with it, and so on.

Step 6.
Check through the text and fill in any important information that you missed. Use a different color of ink or some other way to mark this material that you forgot, so you can study it later. At this point, you may wish to read through the entire chapter as you normally would, to make sure you did not miss anything. Then do another Map, from memory, to check whether you have learned the new material.