In a nutshell…

• Do research & develop your own strategy.
  • *Find out what works for you!*
  • Be a proactive designer of your own reading experience.
• In the following sections, I'll introduce some tips I developed over the years as an ESL student who struggled with reading dense philosophical texts.
Tip #1: for every input, produce one output. One reading cycle = 60 minutes*

45 min • input (read)
• underline important information.
• to be addressed later...

5 min • output (write)
• jot down whatever you remember reading.
• You don’t have to write out full sentences.

10 min • take a break
• repeat 2 more rounds
• after every 3 rounds, take a longer break

* This is a mere benchmark.
Tip #2. Cycle through different readings.

• Avoid reading the same materials consecutively.
  • Your brains will get tired of reading the same contents.
• Read different things.
  • 1st cycle: philosophy of ed
  • 2nd cycle: developmental psychology
  • 3rd cycle: sociology…
• For every 3 cycles, take a longer break.
  • There’s a limit to how much you can focus.
Tip #3. Avoid perfectionism.

• For introductory to medium-level philosophy classes, you don’t have to understand every single sentence written in a philosophical text.
  • Understanding every single sentence in depth will be important only when you want to pursue a career in ancient Greek philosophy or some other subfields of philosophy.
  • You can always clarify your understanding either in class or in sections.

• Try to understand overall ideas first.
Tip #4: Learn how to identify important information.

1. 3 types of markers (phrases or words that signal important ideas)
   1. Common Markers
   2. Semi-common markers
   3. Less well-known but important markers that people often miss

2. What to do with these markers.
4.1. Common Markers

1. Conclusion-hinting markers
   - e.g., that is, hence, therefore, in conclusion, in short, etc.
   - often contain the main ideas of a text or a section.

2. Markers used for contrasting ideas.
   - e.g., however, but, on the other hand
   - Authors contrast ideas to highlight the latter ideas.

3. Emphasis markers
   - e.g., in particular, particularly, especially
   - Authors use them to emphasize ideas.
4.2. Semi-Common Markers

1. Order-hinting markers
   - e.g., First, second, third …
   - orders sometimes don't matter; authors use them to highlight important ideas.

2. Emphasis markers
   - e.g., not only A but also B; not A but B; rather B than A; rather
   - This is a variant of contrasting markers; again, whatever comes after is an important idea.

3. Adjectives or superlatives that signify importance
   - e.g., the greatest, the most, etc.
   - e.g., important; crucial; essential
   - e.g., too + adjective
4.3. Less well-known but important markers that people often miss

1. Definitions

- Sometimes, authors explicitly define what he/she means by a certain word.
- Bookmark the definitions; will be useful when writing papers.

2. Sentences before & after an example or analogy

- Authors use examples and analogies to highlight certain ideas.
- In other words, what's important is not the example or analogy, but what the author wants to illustrate with the examples and analogies.
4.3. Less well-known but important markers that people often miss

3. blanket words

- e.g., each, all, every, never, no one, nothing
- Authors sometimes use these blanket-words to emphasize ideas.
  - e.g., No one today supports Hitler's dangerous ideology.

4. sentences with “I” or “my.”

- Authors use the 1st-person pronouns to be assertive.

5. imperatives

- e.g., should; must; ought to; imperatives ("Note that...")
4.4. What Do I Do with These Markers?

- When reading ....
  - Highlight the sentences with these markers.
  - When you’re lost in the text, re-read the sentences you recently highlighted & try to make sense of what’s going on in the text.
- For long sentences that are difficult to digest,
  - if the sentence contains one of these markers, make an effort to understand it
    - It’s probably worth your effort & time.
  - if the sentence does not contain these markers, skip it.
    - It’s probably of secondary importance anyway.
    - Don’t waste your time reading them.