

Ancient Philosophy

Handout #1: How To Read A Philosophy Book

(with application to the *Gorgias*)

1. Watch for structural elements

e.g., “one point of dispute between us“ [472d]
“the second point in dispute between us” [476a]

2. Watch for three things

Note definitions of all key terms.

Note sets of terms.

Important contrasts.

e.g., medicine, gymnastics, legislation, & justice

Distinctions among closely related terms.

e.g., craft vs. knack, convincing vs. teaching

Note key theses connecting those terms

e.g., rhetoric is a knack, not a craft

Note arguments in defense of those theses

3. Underline *sparingly*

Underline after reading through the section of the text.

Underline the absolute minimum necessary to make the point visible.

4. Read with a pencil

Make an outline.