

How Do Students Use an E-Text? Experimental Investigation of Reading Practices and Testing Outcomes

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Teachers of psychology weigh a variety of pedagogical, practical, and policy related considerations when deciding which textbook to adopt for class. In the modern era, an additional question arises: should I use a print or electronic text? In this presentation, we build upon recently published findings regarding the influence of textbook modality on student perceptions and test performance. Specifically, we present an ecologically valid experimental investigation of how students use an interactive e-text and whether reading and learning outcomes vary when the same chapter is assigned across different text modalities. Participants in the study were undergraduate students randomly assigned to one of three experimental conditions: print textbook, pdf, interactive e-text. In all three conditions, students were given an introduction to psychology chapter to read over the course of a week, after which they returned to the lab to take a test on the material. To increase incentive, financial bonuses were paid for test scores reaching 80% and 90%. Students kept a contemporaneous log of their reading activities throughout the week and then were asked a series of post-test questions about their reading practices and experiences. Statistical analyses explore potential between-group differences in reading and re-reading tendencies, utilization of chapter resources and review exercises, and performance on test questions measuring recall as well as conceptual integration. Classroom implications, study limitations, and future directions will be considered.