Suggestions For the Novice Reader Of Old Norse Who Would Like To Get Some Semblance of Meaning From The Texts Without Tears Or Unnecessary Blood

General Hints

(i) Use Gordon’s glossary wisely. It glosses a great many occurrences of words (by selection), often with explanatory notes, references to the grammar (with the sign §), or a reference (marked as ‘n.’) to the textual notes. Note that the letters þ, æ, ǫ, ø, and œ are listed (in that order) at the end of the glossary (and are filed, in that order, within words starting with other letters). However, somewhat confusingly, the letter ð is listed after d within words (I have followed this confusing practice in the list below). Also, even more confusingly, some words are spelled with th instead of þ or ð, and they are listed where you’d expect them to be.

(ii) Proper names are listed in a separate glossary at the very end of the book.

(iii) Feel free to use a translation of the relevant text. There’s no shame in it!

(iv) Refer as often as you need to to the paradigms of the most common words: pronouns (§108-§116), particularly the demonstrative pronoun (definite article; §112). Be aware of the curious Norse practice of adding the definite article onto the ends of nouns; some samples are given in the paradigm in §112.

(v) Note that some prepositions have objects with unusual cases (notably, dative and genitive). These are indicated in the glossary entry for the preposition. Til + genitive is a common one.

(vi) The other thing that might cause you pain is vowel changes in the strong verbs. If you came across the word bauð, for example, you may or may not quickly connect that with the verb bjóða. In many cases, Gordon’s glossary does list the various verb forms and cross-reference the infinitive, which you can then look up. In other cases, he doesn’t, so you may have frequent recourse to his strong verb tables at §§127-133.

(vii) Some hints on alternative vowels to look under, if you can’t find your word under a particular one:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you can't find it under</th>
<th>Try under</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>ǫ, e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>á</td>
<td>ó</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>æ</td>
<td>á</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Very common vocabulary words, some of them confusable

Á  ON, ONTO, IN, INTO, AT, TO, TOWARDS
AF OUT OF, FROM, OF
AT TO, IN ORDER TO
Eða or, and, but
EF IF
EKKI NOT
EN BUT, AND, THAN, AS (FREQUENTLY USED TO INTRODUCE THE SECOND ELEMENT IN A COMPARISON, E.G., “MORE... THAN; AS MUCH... AS.”)
ENGI (FULLY DECLINED, §116) NO, NONE, NO ONE
ER 3 SEPARATE (AND ALL VERY COMMON) THINGS:
  IS WHEN
  í THAT, WHICH, WHO
  OF OVER, ACROSS, THROUGH, AROUND
  OK AND
SÉR (i) HIMSELF, HERSELF, ITSELF
(ii) BUT ALSO VARIOUS FORMS OF THE VERB SJÁ (TO SEE)
-SK AN ENDING ON VERBS INDICATING THE MIDDLE VOICE; THIS CAN INDICATIVE A PASSIVE, ACTIVE, OR (YES!) MIDDLE MEANING; FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE §165, §170
TO TO, IN, OF, FOR
þar THERE
þá (ER)... þá WHEN, WHEN... THEN
NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH:
þá 3rd PERSON ACCUSATIVE PLURAL PRONOUN (‘THEM’)
þá DEFINITE ARTICLE, FEMININE ACCUSATIVE SINGULAR (‘THE’)
þat THAT
þótt ALTHOUGH, EVEN IF
því THUS, BECAUSE OF THIS, FOR THIS REASON
UM AROUND, ABOUT, INTO, IN
VAR WAS
víð AGAINST, WITH, IN EXCHANGE FOR