

READ EFFECTIVELY

Whichever course you are studying, you will be required to read extensively. Your reading load might seem daunting; however, using effective reading strategies will help you manage your reading load and get the most from your reading.

TIP: Have a clear purpose for your reading - know what you are looking for or want to find out. Make a list of your key search terms or questions to keep you focussed and on track.

Effective reading strategies you can use:

✓ **To manage your course reading**

Break large sections of reading into manageable 'chunks', for example chapters or pages. Read one section at a time.

✓ **To get an overview of a text**

Skim read, moving quickly through the text to get a general impression of the main ideas, content and purpose.

✓ **To evaluate a text**

Some questions you could ask:

- Is this a scholarly source (for example, is it a peer reviewed journal article?)
- Is the author an expert in this field?
- Does the text present recent research?
- Is it relevant to my essay/research topic?

✓ **To find specific information**

Scan the text, looking for specific terms or key words. If the text is online, do a key word search. Locate any relevant sections to read in detail afterwards.

✓ **For research**

Before reading closely, 'speed-date' the article or chapter to assess if it has information you are looking for.

Skim read:

- the title, author, abstract, headings
- any data/figures/graphs/diagrams,
- the summary and any text boxes.

If the article looks relevant, read the introduction and conclusion. If not, move on to the next article / chapter.

✓ **To read in detail**

- Read carefully, underlining or highlighting important information and key terms.
- Write down the bibliographic details of the text: the author/s, title, publisher, publication date, or website URL and date of access.
- Make notes in your own words - summarise or paraphrase important ideas and information.
- Keep a note of the page numbers where you find information or ideas you may cite in your assignment/s.

Note: You may need to read the text more than once to get the information you need and understand the content fully.

TIP: Take short breaks every 30 to 40 minutes to give yourself a chance to process what you have read. You can set a timer on your phone to remind you.



Reading critically

At university you are expected to **critically evaluate** everything you read - even scholarly sources. This involves **analysing and questioning** what you read and not accepting information, claims or arguments without examining the evidence.

Some critical questions you could ask:

- Is the text well-written and easy to follow and understand?
- Does it have a clear focus?
- Does it flow logically?
- Are the main ideas or arguments supported by reliable evidence?
- How does it relate to other texts on this topic - any similarities or differences?
- Does the text have any limitations; for example, a narrow focus, insufficient evidence or a weak argument?
- Is anything not included that should be?
- Does the author acknowledge other scholars, research and perspectives?

TIP

Ask a librarian for help with refining your search terms and/or finding scholarly sources if you are unsure.

Making notes on your reading

It is important to keep a record of your reading, including bibliographical details, and to make notes as you read.

Your notes could include:

- Any technical terms you need to look up.
- Definitions/explanations of new concepts.
- Ideas you want to explore further.
- Additional sources to investigate.
- Any questions you are left with.
- Any information gaps to fill.
- Comparisons with other research, theories, authors or arguments you have read previously.
- Alternative perspectives to consider.
- Links to other sources, topics or ideas.

A quick note-making checklist:

- ✓ Have I noted all the bibliographic details including page numbers?
- ✓ Have I used my own words to paraphrase or summarise ideas, keeping the same meaning as the text?

TIP

Consider how your own assumptions and biases might influence how you respond to other viewpoints or arguments.

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