

# TIP SHEET

## Reading Effectively

### HOW DOES READING PREPARE YOU FOR STUDY?

University study involves extensive reading to ensure you develop the frameworks of knowledge obtained from lectures, tutorials and labs. Most of this reading will be in academic texts that are typically dense, information-rich sources, riddled with jargon and abstract ideas expressed in complex language.

So to manage the scope and nature of your reading, you'll need to adjust how you read.

### SCOPE OF READING

You'll be expected to read textbooks, handouts, journal articles, online sources, newspapers, reports and more. Your lecturers will usually tell you the amount and range of reading that's expected in each unit. These expectations will vary from one unit to another. To manage the volume of your reading, you must prioritise your reading in each unit, e.g. break into essential, recommended, and further/additional reading. You should also do your readings as a routine study activity.

### READING PURPOSES

What and how you read will depend on the purpose of your reading, such as:

- gaining a general overview of a chapter preparing for a lecture/tutorial/discussion
- finding specific information to answer a question/ solve a problem
- preparing for assignments/tests/exams

### APPROACHES TO READING

When reading, it's important to consider how much detail is required and the amount of time you're able to devote to the task. This will help you set a realistic target of what you can accomplish within a given time. It's helpful to approach a reading task by first developing a basic understanding of the topic, before launching into more in-depth study.

### CREATE A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT

Your reading should be done in an environment conducive to learning. So try to:

- eliminate distractions to improve your concentration
- plan reading sessions – allocate times and goals
- work in a comfortable and uncluttered environment
- have the study materials you need within easy reach

### EFFECTIVE READING STRATEGIES

Reading is influenced by the nature of the content, familiarity with the subject matter and your language competency. To deal with these factors and other challenges, you should vary your reading strategies.

#### STRATEGIES

**Scanning:** This is reading to find specific information to answer a question/solve a problem. Use your knowledge of how information is organised to quickly find relevant content, e.g. abstract, introduction, conclusion, summary, tables.

This will enable you to:

- locate the relevant sections
- read only as much as you need to find the relevant information

**Skimming:** This is a quick initial reading to establish usefulness or get an overview. Browse, survey the content, and dip into different parts of the book/chapter.

**Reading topic sentences:** Do this before in-depth reading. Also useful when reading dense texts or new content. Read the topic sentence of each paragraph. This will provide an overview of the key ideas.

**Reading for detail:** Re-read the dense/main parts of the text after you've identified the main argument to extract any supporting evidence, or to evaluate the content. Read slowly, paying attention to detail.

#### Analyse the content as you read by:

- connecting related ideas
- considering varying viewpoints
- identifying key principles
- applying the ideas or transferring the knowledge
- evaluating the argument in relation to the evidence

### READING TO IMPROVE WRITING

Improve your writing by noticing the structure and techniques used in the reading (modelling).

Take note of the:

- overall structure
- paragraph structure and length
- construction of argument
- use of evidence
- analysis and synthesis of literature
- transitions/discourse markers (linking and flow)
- language usage and academic style

## ACTIVE READING TECHNIQUES

Active reading techniques are about how you engage with the text. They help to improve your concentration, and therefore assist with memory and retention. This ultimately enhances your learning.

Some examples include:

- underlining/highlighting key ideas
- varying your pace as you read
- reading parts aloud
- summarising as you read (using your own words when making notes)
- forming questions
- annotating the text
- stopping at strategic points to review and consolidate what you've read

## Read critically

As a student, you're expected to be 'critical' when reading academic work. This means carefully considering the author's intention and the evidence and ideas used to convince the reader.

Rather than accepting everything you read, you're expected to evaluate what you read. Consider the following questions to improve your critical analysis:

- What credibility does the author have in this field?
- What is significant or important about this reading?
- What claims are being made? What is the basis of the claims? What evidence is used?
- How logical are the ideas? Do the conclusions follow from the evidence?
- How valid and generally applicable are the conclusions?

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## EFFECTIVE READING CHECKLIST

- Have you established a positive reading environment?
- Have you established the purpose for your reading?
- Are you using the appropriate reading strategy?
- Are you using active reading techniques?
- Are you reading critically?

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## WANT HELP WITH YOUR STUDY?

Please contact our Academic Skills Centre to find out how we can assist you.

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