

EFFICIENT READING

Efficient reading is an active process. It integrates pre-reading strategies with active note-making and mapping. Focus on what you want to find out from the text and choose an appropriate reading strategy to meet your reading goals.

Reading strategies

Surveying/pre-reading

Look quickly over the whole text. Ask yourself:

- What is it about? What is likely to be covered?
- How does this fit with what I already know about the topic?
- Is it useful for my purpose?
- Is it a current, authoritative, academically suitable text?

Skim

Look over the whole text and read quickly to find:

- The general idea
- The focus of the content.
 - Read the title and abstract, the summary, or the introduction. Focus on information that tells the reader what the article is about. Note the main points covered.
 - Read the conclusion. Focus on the summary or repetition of the main points.
 - Read any headings, sub-headings and words in bold or italics. Note the key words.
 - Read the topic sentence of each paragraph (usually the first sentence). Note the main idea contained in each topic sentence.
 - Look for linking words that show the connections between ideas, e.g. in addition, because, however

Scan

Read quickly to find:

- Specific information
- Particular knowledge about the content.

Look for key words, phrases or names. Look for capital letters and numbers.

Move your eyes systematically over the page.

Understanding what you read

Active reading

As an active reader you should:

- think about how what you are reading fits in with what you already know about the topic
- have a purpose in mind when you read.

By being an active reader, you can make good choices about **what** you read and **how** you read.

Dealing with unfamiliar words and concepts

Often the journal articles you read are written for professionals and experts in the field. If you find it difficult to process the information, it can be helpful to:

- use general text books that introduce the ideas for students and build up your background knowledge
- identify new and important terminology in the introduction or abstracts of what you read. These very key words can be important to understand before continuing with your reading.
- try to focus on general understanding, that is, whole ideas not single words.

Dealing with new terminology

University study will increase your vocabulary. While a dictionary can help to deal with the new terminology and vocabulary you encounter in your reading, it is often more useful to start with contextual clues, that is, the words or situation around the unfamiliar word that can help you work out the meaning. Look for the following:

- Restatement of ideas – restates or explains the meaning of new or key words. Look for these words: or, in other words, that is (i.e.), such as
- Examples – explains the meaning by giving examples. Look for the following language: such as, for example, for instance, including
- Comparison – complex words are often compared to more familiar or standard vocabulary: like, as, as if

To read more efficiently, remember:

- Pre-reading strategies are effective tools that help ensure useful outcomes from your reading – don't waste time reading material that isn't useful or relevant.
- Active reading techniques enhance cognition and learning.
- Diagrams, flow charts and mind maps can be a useful way to organise information.
- Reading actively increases understanding by connecting what you are reading with what you already know and what you need to find out.