

## Reading Guide

Reading well is a question of having a good range of different reading techniques to use at different times. **If you feel you are reading slowly, don't worry.** Reading effectively is about choosing the best strategy for the best situation, which may be fast or slow.

### General tips:

- Warm up before you read. Take a few minutes to think about what you need to know and why.
- Choose your environment based on what works for you to keep your attention. Try a quiet, calm environment. Doesn't work? Choose a busier place, like a cafe. Doesn't work? Try a study group with friends.
- Minimise distractions:
  - Switch your phone to silent, and make checking it your break time every 30 minutes.
  - Disconnect from the internet while reading
  - Ditch digital: read a traditional book and take notes on paper.
  - Use your headphones to tune out what's going on around you. Music without words is often best for concentration or try a white noise soundtrack.
- Cope with interruptions: ask people to hold on while you make a note of what you were thinking or where you were reading (use a Post-it note) when you get interrupted so you can get started again quickly.

So if you want to read better, train yourself in a wide range of strategies, particularly skimming, and think carefully about how you use them.

Strategy	What it means	What it's good for	How to do it well
<b>Skim read</b>	Reading quickly, skipping around and not reading every word to get a sense of what the text is about; to understand the gist or main point.	Works well to help decide if the text is relevant, speed up later readings, and review something you already read.	Looking over the text e.g. at titles, subheadings, and pictures or graphs. Find frequently repeated key words. Read the first sentence of every paragraph.
<b>Scan</b>	Looking for something specific, such as a definition, a piece of data, a name, or an example.	To find a particular piece of information.	Treat this like a word search puzzle, not reading. Start from the bottom of the page and going backwards. Look for defining characteristics like an unusually long word, capital letters, numbers, etc - anything that stands out.

<b>Read intensively</b>	Line-by-line, reading intensively or carefully every single word in the text.	Reading something challenging where it is important for you to understand everything fully.	Take your time. Make a note (just a tick or a cross) about what you understand and what you don't.
<b>Question</b>	Ask specific questions that you need to answer from your reading.	To read more efficiently and keep you active and awake while reading.	Skim read the text to get the gist, then write your questions. Use your module outline and lecture notes to help write questions. Read more carefully to answer questions.
<b>Read critically</b>	Looking for the author's argument and not accepting what they say as fact; questioning and challenging what you are reading.	To analyse carefully what you are reading and prepare you to write more critical assignments	Identify the argument, evidence and interpretation. Compare and contrast two sources on the same topic for similarities and differences. Evaluate the quality of the evidence and argument. Identify any assumptions being made.
<b>Annotate</b>	Making notes, underlining, highlighting or commenting on the text that you are reading. Can be done online as well as on paper. Remember not to do it in library books.	To signpost you to key parts of the text to come back to later, record your thoughts and keep you engaged in reading.	Don't highlight every sentence. If you notice that you are going back to re-read particular sentences, that's a good sign it's important. When you reach the end of a paragraph or a page, ask yourself what the main point or take away was for you and underline that.
<b>Make notes</b>	In a separate document, note key examples, details and other relevant support that might be useful for you later. Can be on PC or by hand on paper; or by dictation on phone or laptop.	Help you to remember, summarise, paraphrase and organise ideas.	Summarise and put notes in your own words. Use shorthand, abbreviations and symbols. Keep quotes brief and only use where really necessary. Label your notes with full reference information and organise them.
<b>Read on paper (not online)</b>	Reading a traditional book or chapter on paper encourages you to follow the author's argument in a linear way.	To grasp a complex theory, a particular law and its implications, and so on.	Take notes separately as you read. Use the contents page (beginning) and index (at the end) to find the sections most relevant to you. Read those, plus the introduction, rather than attempting the whole book (unless it's all useful).

<b>Read online</b>	More visual distractions and encourages more skimming and surfing through links to other texts.	Skimming or scanning information; deciding whether you need to read it intensively later.	Download journal articles to annotate them (highlight in PDF) Take notes on e-books in a notebook or word file Don't follow all the links, and wait until you have finished reading before you follow any.
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