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?

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

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

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