Introduction

Reading habits

Reading strategies

Reading critically
Seven indicators

We’re going to first examine what kind of readers we are.

- There are a series of statements on the handout. Note on the long arrow how much you agree or disagree with each of them.
“A lot of my reading is very frustrating. I rarely seem to know what I’m looking for, what’s important and what’s not. I end up with piles and piles of notes or with every second sentence highlighted. Basically, I read what I’m told and just hope I get the main idea out of it.”
Indicator 1

Aimless                                                  Purposeful

Make sure you know the reason you are reading a particular work. Ask yourself:

• Why am I reading this?
• How does this relate to my course, my essay or next week’s tutorial?
Indicator 2

Agree ——— Disagree

“The way I see it, the lecturers have already read everything there is to read on their subjects, and if they’ve put these readings on the list or chosen this particular textbook for the course, then that’s what they must want you to know.”
Indicator 2

Passive  Active

Ask yourself:
• What is new?
• What is different from what I’ve read before?

Look for new ideas, new writers, extra references.
Keep an open mind but not an empty one.
“My reading style tends to be rather scrappy. I read each item as it comes up on the reading list – either that or whatever happens to be available on line, or in the library when I go there. But I only really try to pull the different ideas together when I have to do an assignment, and often that’s pretty hard ...”
Indicator 3

Non-contextualising  Contextualising

Continue to ask questions:
• How does this relate to what I already know?
• Who wrote the text?
• Why?
• When?
• Why is it important?
"As a student, I don’t feel I’m in any position to question or dispute what the experts are saying. I just don’t know enough. I find it hard enough to understand what they are saying, let alone criticise it. I wouldn’t know where to start ..."
Indicator 4

Uncritical                          Critical

Remember that your judgement is valid. Engage with the writer, ask:

• What is the writer saying?
• Why?
• Are the writer’s claims reasonable?
• Is the evidence adequate?
“I’ve never got time to read all that my lecturers say I should. In fact, I sometimes think I spend more time searching on the computer, than with an actual article in my hands. Other students tell me I should skim and use other techniques like that, but I don’t think I’d ever trust myself not to miss the main points.”
Indicator 5

Inefficient  Efficient

Make your reading focused, ask yourself:

• Is this text useful for my purpose?

Look for the specific information you need

Don’t read absolutely everything
“I don’t see that it matters what form information actually comes in. You’ve still got to read it, haven’t you – whether it’s a report or an essay or a textbook? I find the university library very intimidating. Textbooks are usually the best because they summarise the original papers and reports for you.”
Indicator 6

Unresourceful  Resourceful

• Learn how to use the library well.
• Learn the ‘anatomy’ of your textbooks.
• Use reference aids: dictionaries, atlases, encyclopaedias.
• Learn how to find materials for your subject: journals, indexes, collected abstracts.
“The less reading the better, in my case. I much prefer getting my information in other ways: from TV, or films, or discussions with other students, or from lectures, so long as they’re not boring or don’t stray off the topic.”
Indicator 7

Resistant

Develop confidence in reading.

Enthusiastic

Find other students who study the same subject, swap books, recommend references to each other.
Reading and research: reading helps you:

- develop your own understanding of your field;
- discover what other researchers are doing;
- keep up to date with developments;
- place your own research in a context;
- identify theoretical perspectives you may wish to draw on;
- position your own works among different perspectives;
- find support for your views;
- explore possible research methods you may use;
- make observations about writing conventions in your discipline to develop your own academic writing style, and
- pursue your own enjoyment of reading around the subject.
Reading strategies

SQ3R

• Survey
• Question
• Read
• Recall
• review
Reading strategies continued

Establish what you already know
Identify your expectations about the reading

Focus on the question or task
Determine what you need to discover and look for answers

Break reading into manageable segments
Set yourself a goal, e.g., to read a certain number of pages and reward yourself when you’ve completed it

Keep track of what you read
Devise a clear note-taking strategy
Note-taking methods

Lazy method
- mark passages in text and note comments in the margins

Mind maps or pattern notes
- can show the development of ideas

Column method
- excellent for future reference
Note taking: Mind-Maps
The column method

Include bibliographical information – author, year, title, volume/issue no.s, publisher, place published

Direct quotes “……” p. 17

Summaries (main ideas, no elaboration or examples)

Paraphrases (say it in your own words)

How does this information relate to other texts I have read?
What important links can be made to the topic/other research?
How is the information relevant? (if not, should I pursue it at this time?)
Does the author say anything new or interesting?
Is there anything I don’t understand?
Is the author saying anything I disagree with? Why do I disagree?
Does the author contradict other authors on the same topic?
What conclusions can be drawn from the text?
This article is about the latest developments in Adaptive Cruise Control (ACC) for automobiles. "Every minute at least one person dies in a car crash" p.40 "The ultimate solution ....is to keep cars from smashing into one another" p.40 The technology exists for sensors and processors that can respond instantly to the distance and movement of other vehicles- cars speed & distance from other objects can be controlled, very expensive –installed in luxury cars(p44)
# Organising notes

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<td>*paraphrase evidence on p.16 to support this claim.</td>
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Asking questions while you read

- The author’s position and purpose
- Style and format
- Content
- Structure
Reading difficult material

As noted previously, break the reading into chunks.

Read first for what you do understand and mark what you don’t understand to re-read later.

Think about extra resources that could help your understanding.

Write while you read.

• There is a connection between writing and thinking- so,
  – after each manageable chunk, recall and review your reading by writing a sentence summarising what you’ve just read.

If you still don’t comprehend all of the reading – don’t panic.

• Set it aside and read it again in the next day or two.
Critical reading: recognise

Your motives

Your assumptions

Your biases

Self awareness
Blocks to critical reading and thinking

- Cultural conditioning
- Reliance on authority
- Black and white thinking
- Stereotypic thinking
Open-mindedness

- Make reasonable inferences
- Consider a variety of possible perspectives
- Respect alternative interpretations
- Accept a better explanation
- Do not reject unpopular views
Discipline

Be precise, meticulous, comprehensive and exhaustive.
Resist manipulation.
Avoid snap judgements.
Final tips for critical thinking

Critical thinkers are:
• sceptical by nature;
• active, not passive;
• open to new ideas.

Non-critical thinkers:
• see things in black and white;
• don’t see links;
• only value their perspectives or goals.
Conclusion

As readers you need to be:

• purposeful;
• active;
• able to contextualise;
• critical;
• efficient;
• resourceful and
• enthusiastic.
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During Session - Consultations with a peer writing assistant. Book Online

http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/consult.html

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