

Computing Research Project

Effective reading and note taking



Objectives

- Goals of reading
- Reading techniques
- Reading pattern
- Reasons for note-taking
- Techniques for note-taking
- Advantages and disadvantages of note taking

- You have to acquire the appropriate technique of reading their contents in a limited time
- According to Fairbairn and Winch (1991, pp. 7–14), reading involves
 1. finding meaning in written texts
 2. literal, inferential and evaluative comprehension of texts
 3. reading in different ways

Goals of reading

- Kimmelman (1992, pp. 12–105) state that your goals are
 1. to review the text
 2. to use context clues and a dictionary to understand new words
 3. to identify and mark important ideas in a chapter
 4. to recognize how authors organize and develop ideas
 5. to identify new words and phrases that describe the methods or patterns of organizing and developing ideas
 6. to apply comprehension skills to vocabulary and text material



Figure 2.1 Reading text quickly is not easy if you do not have the appropriate technique

Reading techniques(1)

- Freeman and Meed (1993, pp. 31–41) suggest the following techniques:
 - Skimming:
 - Reading quickly only things like contents, headings, introductions and conclusions
 - is useful if you wish to check whether a written report is relevant, or wish to find particular information or ideas quickly
 - Scanning:
 - A rapid search for title or a key word
 - deliberately ignore everything except the one item which you are scanning

Reading techniques(2)

- **Reading to understand**
 - This involves detailed study of a chapter, passage or article in order to absorb all the major facts and ideas
 - You may read it more than once, and take notes to summarize what you have read
- **Word-by-word reading**
 - you actually need to read every word extremely carefully; for example, when reading an exam question or following a set of instructions
- **Reading for pleasure**
 - This is the reading you do to relax and enjoy, as with a novel.

A reading pattern

- Newman (1989, pp. 12–14) reading techniques fall into a basic pattern involving four stages
 - Stage 1:
 - Try to gain some quick impression of what the book is about
 - the questions tackled and the answers put forward are relevant to your needs
 - by glancing over the cover or jacket, the preface (if any), the list of contents, and the index

A reading pattern(2)

- **Stage 2**
 - If you decide that the book is relevant to your research subject
 - you must formulate the question or questions that you anticipate will be answered in the book
 - In addition, at this stage you must adopt an active and analytical attitude
- **Stage 3**
 - After formulating the main question or questions that you anticipate the book will answer
 - You must review the book to look for answers for your questions

A reading pattern(3)

- **Stage 3**
 - You must then look for the answers or conclusions that the author has drawn
 - You will also look at arguments and evidence put forward to support the views expressed
 - However, cases where conclusions are unsupported, arguments or evidence are non-existent, or sometimes there is no conclusion at all
- **Stage 4**
 - Supposing that you have extracted the relevant information from the written report
 - you must now record your data in note form, so that later you can retrieve it and use it easily at the appropriate stage

Put your reading skills to the test by reading an article in different ways. Select, from the information you have collected about your subject, any article or research paper that you have not yet read but that you think might contain useful information. Now read it in the following ways:

- 1 First skim the text and write down very briefly the main points of the information offered. Remember to first check the contents or abstract, the main headings, and perhaps part of the last paragraph about conclusions. Do not write down more than twenty words, but make sure that they are quite precise and organized in a coherent way so that you will easily understand your notes at a later date.
- 2 Next, select two main concepts that you are interested in and that seem to be featured prominently in the article (perhaps they are mentioned in the title). Scan the text and note what is written about these two concepts.

Exercise(2)

- 3 Now take just one section headed by a subtitle and read it carefully, making detailed notes on all the major issues and facts. You should have about ten short notes to cover the information properly.
- 4 Finally, read the last paragraph(s) very carefully indeed. What are the main conclusions and why are they important, or perhaps they are not? What effect do they have on your thinking about your subject? You could express this as personal notes to remind you of the significance of this article in some aspect of your work.
- 5 The other type of reading – reading for pleasure – you can practise without needing it to be the subject of an exercise!

Note taking

- You should take notes only of the information that you judge relevant to your research subject
- It is generally agreed that, except for quotations, when you take notes you should use your own active vocabulary and not the author's
- Newman (1989, p. 15) says that it is important to use your active vocabulary in note-taking, because it helps to ensure that you have a reasonably full grasp of the meaning of the information concerned
- when you come to reread and synthesize the notes, your personal active vocabulary is more easily comprehensible and recognizable.

Reasons for taking notes(1)

- Freeman and Meed (1993,p. 43) lay down a number of reasons why
 - To help you remember something: You can't hope to retain a whole lecture, book or discussion permanently in your memory so instead you make notes of the most important items for revision and reference
 - To keep a permanent record of something
 - To help in your planning: Notes can be a good way of starting off a project or a piece of writing; you can note down the main things you need to do, the books you need to read, and so on

Reasons for taking notes(2)

- To reorder material: rearranging material in whichever form is most convenient to you
- To help you understand what you are learning: forces you to think them through properly and is one of the best ways of remembering them
- To help you to concentrate: making notes helps to keep you active and involved
- To show other people You may want other learners to benefit from the notes you have made.

Taking notes judgements(1)

- When making notes, you will have to make judgements all the time about what information will, or might, be of use to you
- These judgements will depend on your own knowledge of your subject and the nature of your research problem
- You may find it useful to write comments about your reactions to the reference materials and state relationships, conclusions or interpretations that come to mind during the contemplative phases of your work

Taking notes judgements(2)

- You may also want to jot down items that require further checking.
- You may want to make comparisons, weave a web of logical evidence, or buttress arguments by passages from recognized authorities
- However, a haphazard collection of notes will leave you with an impoverished resource, and may cause your investigation to collapse

Note-taking techniques

- Smith and Smith (1994, pp. 93–103) put forward what they call ‘golden rules’
 - Clarify your purpose.
 - Write all your notes on the same sized paper or cards.
 - In making a full bibliographic record of the source of the notes you are writing to enable you to locate the book, article etc. quickly at a later date.
 - Use the title of the chapter or lecture to help you anticipate the main ideas of the text
 - Keep your own ideas, comments and criticisms separate from those in the text
 - When you finish, sum up what you have written



Figure 2.2 There are many different ways
of taking notes

Note-taking techniques(2)

- Wiersma (1986, pp. 70–1) argued that notes on research reports containing the following items of information:
 - Bibliography entry
 - Problem: This is a statement of the research problem; or include statements of hypotheses.
 - Subjects: The individuals involved in research studies are often called ‘subjects’ of the research
 - Procedures: This section describes how the research was conducted
 - Results and conclusions: In long reports with many results and conclusions, it is best to number them

The advantages of using computer system in note-taking

- You need write the notes only once and than use copy the text when you want to use it.
- You can easily search through your notes for key words
- You can repeat bibliographic information for each note at the touch of a button
- You can link notes to outlines, subjects, authors, dates and other categories of your choice
- Keep your note, access it everywhere

The disadvantages of using computer system in note-taking

- It takes time to learn how to use the database program effectively.
- You need to have access to a computer.
- You can be tempted to miss out on valuable redrafting stages as you electronically copy and order your notes for use in essays. **Having to physically rewrite text always prompts you to think analytically about what you are writing**

- Dr Nicholas Walliman 2010 Your Research Project, A step By step guide for the first time researcher