

Reading Strategies

Objectives:

When you have finished this section, you will be able to:

- employ suitable reading strategies for different reading purposes
- deconstruct an academic text to analyse its content, organization and author's stand

The reading strategies we use depend on our purpose for reading. In the course of your studies, you will encounter the following purposes for reading:

- ✓ reading to summarize a short passage or article
- ✓ reading to respond to ideas in an article
- ✓ reading to research for an essay/oral presentation
- ✓ reading to prepare for a class discussion
- ✓ reading to prepare for a test or exam

Sources list for this lesson:

1. Improving Reading Efficiency:
http://sydney.edu.au/stuserv/documents/learning_centre/M1.pdf
(Document from the University of Sydney Learning Centre)
2. Efficient Reading Strategies
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M3aZNaPY88YYY>
(Monash University on Efficient reading strategies)
3. Effective Notetaking
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WtW9lyE04OQ>
(Taking Cornell notes in a lecture or from a text)
4. Annotating while reading:
http://learners.ncu.edu/writingprogram/writing_center.aspx?menu_id=82
5. Critical reading towards critical writing:
<http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/researching/critical-reading/>

1. Selecting an appropriate reading strategy for your reading purpose

Reading for an academic purpose is very different from leisure reading (at least it should be). Faced with numerous, long and complex readings in your modules, you need to develop some useful strategies to read effectively and efficiently, making the most of your limited time and the most of the text.

Task 1: Watch the video on Efficient Reading Strategies (source list item #2 above).

- While watching the video, answer the following questions:
 - What is the T-model?
 - Are journal articles and text books read the same way?
 - Do you only read for content? What other elements should you pay attention to in a text?
 - Why is it useful to pay attention to structure and language?
- In the chart below, identify which reading strategies discussed above would be appropriate for each of the reading purposes.

Reading purpose		Strategies
A. Reading to summarize an article (with a view to study later/use in an essay later)		
B. Reading to research for an essay/a presentation (to learn about a topic or a view on a topic)		
C. Reading to search for a specific piece of information/evidence		
D. Preparing for a lecture		

2. Steps for effective reading:

To read effectively at university, you first need to find ways to recognize a text which is worth your time (if it is assigned by your lecturer, then it *is* worth the time!). Then you need to process the reading efficiently for its key point and relevant supporting ideas (what is relevant in a reading depend on your purpose). You also need to have a system to enable you to revisit these key points easily without having to re-read the whole text. Below are some key elements to consider as you try various strategies.

a. Determining a text's level of relevance for you:

- Survey the text: is it worth reading for my purpose? Read the title, the abstract (or the introduction), keywords and headings to decide if you should read further.
- Read the introduction and the conclusion
- Decide if the text is useful for you
- Check the figures, the tables, the headings and the first sentences in each paragraph

b. Developing a note-taking or reading management system:

Within your first few years at University, you should develop a system for note-taking and managing your readings:

- Use Mendeley (this is a free management and note-taking system). We will use this in Week 8. You can also take workshops at the NUS library.
- Use Microsoft Notebook, or Evernote
- Explore the use of Cornell note-taking discussed in the video from the source list item #3 above -(which can be done on Notebook)

c. Becoming an active reader:

- Read with a purpose in mind- always skim to decide whether the text is relevant to you. Give up reading as soon as you decide the text may not be helpful.
- Make useful annotations: this is like having a dialogue or conversation with the author. This is an essential part of reading critically:
 - Comment in the margin "*definition of xxx*".
 - Question the text "*??-this contradicts text XYZ*".
 - Note any reflection, or link to your previous knowledge.
 - Draw explicit connections with the assignment/topic you are writing about: "*useful for counter-argument/ use for background/...*"
- Summarize useful sources which you will need later on (this means you will not have to read the whole text again) and enter in your reading management system. These summaries can be entered into a synthesis grid (which we will see in Week 4).

d. Becoming a critical reader:

- Engage critical reading skills at all times. Make some judgements about the text you are reading by asking:
 - What is the purpose of the text?
 - Who is the writer and what are her/his affiliation?
 - What are the central claims and how are these developed or argued?
 - What is the evidence provided?
 - No claim should lack supporting evidence but some evidence can be poorly used, or misleading.
 - Are there gaps or inconsistencies in the argument?
 - Are there any unargued assumptions?

Follow-up Tasks: Practicing reading strategies and note-taking skills:

1. Use a text from your discipline which requires note-taking:
 - **Survey the text with the following questions in mind:**
 - Identify the purpose of the text (where do you find this information?)
 - Identify the stages/structure (identify the relationship between paragraphs/sections)
 - **Read the introduction/abstract and the conclusion:**
 - What is the main idea? Identify the author's stand and key ideas
 - **Skim the text:** read the first sentence in each paragraph (identify the key ideas). Annotate with brief phrases in the margin (key purpose/key information)
 - **Read in more detail** to identify supporting details in the paragraphs (highlight key information useful to your purpose/annotate in the margin)
 - **Read the reference list** (and highlight and find relevant sources for your purpose)
 - **Text analysis for academic register in your discipline:** Use the toolkits (seen in Week 1) to analyse how your discipline uses these resources.

Preparation for next tutorial:

Skim the handout on Summarizing, Paraphrasing and Stance.

Skim through the Module 2 Sources on:

<http://writesite.elearn.usyd.edu.au/m2/m2u1/index.htm>