



ACADEMIC READING SKILLS
FIRST GRADE STUDENTS
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS DEPARTMENT
FIRST LECTURE
GENERAL TIPS FOR READING

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What do you find difficult about reading at university?

- 1- Finding enough time and energy
- 2- Maintaining concentration
- 3- Improving speed
- 4- Managing vocabulary
- 5- Selecting what to focus on in texts
- 6- Understanding new, theoretical or detailed information
- 7- Identifying main points and arguments
- 8- Evaluating evidence
- 9- Reading texts that assume background knowledge & experience
- 11- Reading different types of text (case studies, reports, literature reviews etc.)

Effective reading: general advice

The following advice may seem obvious, but it is important.

- 1- Consider where you read. Always read in a well-lit and quiet place that is free of distractions, and don't get into the habit of reading university materials in bed! (unless you want to go to sleep).
- 2- Don't vocalize as you read. This will slow you down, it won't help concentration, and it will lead to bad reading approaches.
- 3- Read at times when you can concentrate, and maintain concentration by taking regular short breaks, perhaps every 30 or 45 minutes.
- 4- Set yourself reading tasks (10 pages, 1 chapter, 1 section of a chapter etc).
- 5- Remember that reading often takes longer than you expect and you often need to go beyond set texts. Give yourself enough time.

TIPS ON HOW TO READ A TEXT (BEFORE YOU ACTUALLY READ IT)

Do this	Purpose
Look at the title	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• to try to predict the general topic
Explore information outside the text (photos, captions, subheadings)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• to find the source (where it appeared)• to predict the specific aspect of the topic
Think about the subject	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• to find out what you already know about it
Skim the article more than once <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The first time, pass your eyes over it very quickly• The second time, look at the first sentence of paragraphs and discourse markers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• to get a general impression of the contents and organization• to check if you predicted the topic• to see what some of the subtopics are• to get a global picture of the organization of the article• to find out the topics of paragraphs• to see which paragraphs go together to form blocks• to find main ideas

What to look for in a text

1- Topic

What is the text about (what general topic and what specific aspect of the general topic)? For example, a text might be about art (general), specifically about art in education, and more specifically about art for children with learning difficulties. The topic of a text is usually announced in the title or subtitle.

2- The main idea

What does the writer say/claim/argue /believe about the topic? What statement does the writer make about the topic? What is the writer's opinion/point of view about the topic? Sometimes the main idea is simply information, but often it is a specific point of view, an argument or a claim. Usually the writer states the main argument explicitly in one or more sentences, but sometimes the reader needs to conclude it from the text.

3- How the text is organized

What are the main sections of the text? What does the writer present/give us in each section?

4- How the writer supports the main idea

What does the writer give us in the text to support the main idea/argument/point of view? What does the text offer to persuade us to believe the writer's claim/argument/ point of view? What does the writer use to convince us? Does the text contain explanations, examples, factual information or research reports to strength then the argument?

5- Writer's purpose

Why has the writer written this article? What message does the writer want to bring across? Writers have reasons for writing. Very often writers have more than one reason. Here are some possible reasons: to provide information, to convince the reader about something, to suggest solutions to a problem, to motivate readers to change something (a call to action).

WHILE YOU READ IT

1- If you have trouble with the meaning of words or phrases:

- Read 'around' the word – the whole sentence and the sentences before and after it.
- Try to guess the general meaning of the word/phrase, from its context and its form.
- Use a dictionary only if these steps don't work. (Remember to keep the context in mind when you choose the correct meaning from the dictionary.)
- Explain the ideas to yourself, using other words.

2- If you have trouble with the meaning of sentences:

- Read the sentences around it.
- Pay attention to discourse signals that help you understand how parts of a sentence are connected (for example: "and, but, or, so, although, because, in order to")
- Try to analyze the sentence. - Find the main clause and its subject and verb. - Look at the additions to the main clause. What questions do they answer?

3- If you have trouble understanding what a substitute word ("it, this, that" etc.) refers to:

- Read the whole sentence and the sentences around it.
- Decide if the substitute word refers to a specific word or phrase or to an idea.
- Draw an arrow from the substitute word to what it refers to.