

## Reading effectively

Reading is likely to be an essential component of your studies, whether you're completing course work, revising for an exam or working on a literature review as part of your final year project. Faced with 10 textbooks on your reading list, or thousands of 'hits' after you've searched for papers on a particular topic it's often difficult to know how or where to start.

### Before you read

- **Be sure of the purpose for reading the selected material.** What type of information do you want to learn from it? How is this material connected with other materials on the topic?
- **Preview the material to assess the style of writing and presentation.** It often helps to start with texts you are comfortable with.
- **Set goals for how many pages or papers you'll be able to read.** Don't attempt to read a whole book or every paper your search engine has found. Browse the title, contents page and section headings first to locate the relevant content. Remember to stay focussed on why you are reading this text.

### While you are reading

- **Skim the text for ideas and concepts, it is often not necessary to read every section or every paragraph word by word.** Pace your reading speed so that you read concepts not words.
- **Note down key words and phrases.** Be selective and don't write down everything.
- **Record details of author, title, place of publication, publisher, date and page numbers with any notes you take.** You won't have the frustration of trying to find the source again when preparing references for your essay. This will also help you to avoid inadvertent plagiarism.
- **Link the materials to the concepts and ideas that you have read elsewhere.** This helps you build up an overview of the topic.

### After you read

- **Recall mentally the highlights of what you have just read.** This enables you to remember the information.
- **Review your materials and notes within a few days to consolidate what you have learned.** Set them out in a way that suits your own learning style such as a mind map.

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