

Reading and note making

(in 30 minute chunks)

Step 1. Prior to reading

(5 minutes)

Think about the topic and clarify your purpose for reading

Prepare yourself by clarifying your purpose:

- Why am I reading this text (is it to prepare for a lecture/assessment task/exam)? What do I already know of this topic from the unit content and learning materials?
- What do I expect to find out?

Think about the organisation of the text

Skim and scan through the whole text, focusing on layout, figures, tables, diagrams and note key parts of the text, e.g. title page, list of contents. Read summaries, abstract, introduction and conclusion to get an overview of what the text is about.

Decide if you will continue to read the whole text or only part of the text

Step 2. As you read

(20 minutes)

Keep in mind your purpose for reading

Is it to get an overall understanding or to gather specific information for an assessment? Knowing what the big picture is will help you extract the relevant detail.

Read chunks of text and focus on what is relevant

Scan the text for useful information then select and read through these sections in detail. Take more time for difficult passages. Read chunks of text (a paragraph is the smallest chunk) and pay close attention to topic sentences (often, but not always the first sentence in a paragraph) to get an idea of the focus of each paragraph.

Keep refocusing on your purpose

Most importantly, read actively

Do something with the information as you read, e.g. as you read, ask and answer questions, take notes (don't forget to record bibliographic details), record the responses in your own words, draw diagrams and note questions for further focus.

Step 3. On completion of the reading

(5 minutes)

Consolidate what you have learnt through accurate note making

- Summarise and paraphrase (put in your own words) 3 – 5 major ideas from the text.
- Re-read the key areas of the document if needed.
- Record referencing/bibliographic details accurately and systematically.
- Organise your thinking through mind mapping, brainstorming, sketching, drawing, colour coding, folders, digital filing and other planning tools.
- Go over your notes, expand and check for your understanding.
- Reflect and evaluate what you have gained from the text and ensure that you have recorded useful information for your purpose i.e. for your assessment task/project.

Remember that if you have just read from the beginning to the end, you will probably not have useful information for later use!