

Reading to Write: Reading Strategically

Writing involves reading. Knowing how to read strategically will save you time throughout the research process, and ensure that you are better equipped to find the information that you need. Depending on your purpose, you can use different reading methods.

Reading Method	Purpose	When to Use	Strategy
Skimming	to get the main idea of a text or to see if the source is relevant to your research topic	during your academic literature search	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read the title, article abstract, or chapter summary.• Skip details and focus on main headings, the intro & conclusion, the beginnings and ends of paragraphs, and visuals.• Move eyes quickly down the page, and do not dwell on examples or explanations, until you have the overall idea of the piece.• Assess relevance of text based on content, approach/methods used by the author, recentness of publication, and credibility of source.
Searching/Scanning	to locate something specific	once you have identified relevant academic literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use the index or table of contents to find specific terms, concepts, or information.• Move eyes quickly down the page, ignoring everything except the keywords or concepts.• Use sticky notes to mark specific section(s).• Once what you require is located, read the section closely.
Focused and/or Critical Reading	to understand, question, connect, analyze, or criticize content	once you have identified relevant academic literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Examine important sections of the text closely to fully understand it -- determine main points and arguments and identify & define key concepts.• Clarify confusing words or terms.• Utilize an active approach to reading by making notes and annotating the text [highlighting key words and sections; writing questions in the margins].• Look for secondary material to directly quote in your paper.