

Strategic reading

At university, you can end up with a large reading workload. Use techniques to allow you to select what you really need to read, so that you:

- Avoid wasting time reading on topics which you already have a good understanding – preview first
- Spend time reading and making notes on the topics on which you are less clear
- Quickly find material that you need for an assignment
- Find facts that were missing from your lecture notes
- Find a reference that another student told you was very useful

Smart reading techniques also allow you to:

- preview an article or website to see how useful it will be
- mentally create an overview of a reading to enhance your understanding when you read it again more slowly
- make notes efficiently

Two smart reading techniques are **skimming** and **scanning**.

Skimming

Quickly viewing a section to get a general impression of the text: the author's main argument, the themes or ideas covered in a chapter or website, or the number of sections and the amount of detail on each within a reading.

Selecting material

- Helps you select a book, or survey a chapter before reading or studying it:
 - locate appropriate material for use in research and
 - decide which sources you will photocopy or download
- Help improve comprehension by arousing prior knowledge of the topic and bringing questions to mind

Even quickly reading through the title of a chapter and all the subtitles will tell you a lot about the organisation of the ideas. Reading the first sentence of each paragraph will give you more details about the way the ideas are being discussed.

Re-familiarising yourself with material you have previously read

- Try to remember as many of the ideas and details of the content as possible.
- Then decide what it is you want to accomplish by your review:
 - Are you checking you can recall all the main ideas?
 - If you know the main ideas, do you need to review the significant details – names, places, terms?
 - Are you trying to establish in your mind a sequence of events or a procedure?

- Do you need to fill in a skeleton outline to clarify the structure of the whole?
- Familiarity with your notes on a topic will enable you to 'float' over a great deal of it, stopping to read only when necessary.

Skimming quick-tips

- Read the first paragraph and the headings
- Read the first or last sentences of the following paragraphs
- Alternately read and 'float' over information
- Spend time interpreting any diagrams, graphs or 'boxed' examples.
- Seek words that tell you *who, what, how many, what happened, to whom, when, where, why* and *how*.

Scanning

Quickly being able to locate specific information, such as words, numbers, names or ideas, to answer specific questions.

Scanning quick-tips

- Fix clearly in your mind what you are looking for – develop key words or questions
- Anticipate how the information will look.
- Run your finger, or pencil, down the middle of the page or backward and forwards across the page. Let your eyes follow this seeking the particular target.

Scanning a book

When scanning a book there are different steps to be taken depending on your purpose, whether you are looking for a table, chart or diagram, or looking for an answer to a specific question.

When you start looking for your information, scan until you find your key word or some information that seems relevant. Then read. If you have found what you need, mark the passage and take notes. If the passage you have found is still not sufficient, keep scanning for the next relevant key word.

Step 1: Check the book's table of contents, table of figures, and index

Step 2: Read the chapter headings in the table of contents

If the keyword/concept is not there, check to see if the book has index and look for the keyword there

Step 3: Search the index for the topics or key words.

If you cannot find anything, move on to another book

Scanning an article

Step 1: Most articles will have an abstract and list of keywords at the beginning; read these sections to see if your keyword or selected concepts are there. If so, continue scanning the document; otherwise try another.

Step 2: Scan the introduction and conclusion for your key terms.

Step 3: Scan the headings e.g. methodology, results or literature review sections.

Academic writing and study skills support

1. Academic Q+A

If you have a quick question about study skills or academic writing, then they can ask it on the [Academic Q+A forum](#), which can be accessed via the [Academic Support Stream site](#).

2. Consultations

One-to-one consultations with learning advisors and writing consultants are [available online and on campus](#). Consultants can answer your questions about academic writing and study skills or give you feedback on your assignment's structure, focus, paragraph structure, flow, presentation, use of sources, and referencing.

3. Online Writing and Learning Link (OWLL)

Develop your academic writing and study skills with the [Online Writing and Learning Link \(OWLL\)](#) website from Massey University. OWLL includes information on assignment writing, assignment types, referencing, study skills, and exam skills.

4. Pre-reading Service

The [Pre-reading Service](#) is a free service, which gives students an opportunity to send their draft assignment to [CLS consultants](#) for review and advice. Students receive individual written feedback on their assignment's structure, focus, paragraph structure, flow, style, presentation, referencing, and use of sources. The service can be accessed via the [Academic Support Stream site](#).

5. Workshops

Free study seminars and workshops are run on campus and online. See [Workshops page on OWLL](#) for [programmes and registration details](#).