

Reading actively

Level one - preliminary reading

There are two basic principles you might adopt

- **Preparation**

Identify a purpose

Minimise distractions and find an optimum study environment

Ignore the speed of your reading and break it into manageable chunks

- **Skimming**

Rephrase the title or heading as a question

Skim to get hold of general layout/big picture

Skim to pick up the general drift of the argument/principal viewpoint

Skim to pick out the key ideas and sections to which you need to return

Refer to subheadings, illustrations, graphics

Return to introductory paragraphs, summaries, conclusions (for reading journal articles, use the abstract as well)

Make use of the contents page and the index - identify relevant chapters and references

Level two - critical reading

There are five basic principles you might adopt.

- **Evaluate** – aim for purposeful critical questioning.

Be sceptical and ask questions concerning facts, opinions, evidence, argument and bias.

- **Connect** – aim to build inter-relationships

Be open minded and relate current reading to other sources and your existing knowledge

- **Distinguish** - aim to make distinctions

Be able to distinguish between the main ideas and the important details which clarify or support them through proof/evidence/example

- **Identify** - aim to recognise key words and concepts

Be aware of verbal signposts (repeated or emphasised words or phrases) and visual layout.

- **Concentrate** - aim to maintain focus

Be careful to consider what you have learnt and reflect on meaning throughout making relevant notes where necessary