



Writing Centre

Academic Reading Strategies

Faced with a challenging reading assignment? Try these strategies.

To determine if an article or book is appropriate for your research:

- **Skimming:** Look only at the general layout of the work. What is the format? Does it contain relevant headings, citations, illustrations, or graphs?
- **Scanning:** Search the article for specific information relevant to your research: dates, names, locations, discipline-specific terminology, etc.

To improve your comprehension of a work:

1. **Chunking:** Look at smaller sections of a larger work, such as paragraphs, or even phrases, to understand their meaning, before attempting to make sense of the whole thing.
2. **Context Clues:** Use other information present in the text to determine meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary or ideas.

Example: The notion of a **plutocracy**, in other words, a system of governance by the wealthy, was exemplified by the Roman Empire. (In this example, the challenging concept ‘plutocracy’ is defined within the sentence as ‘a system of governance by the wealthy’.)

Example: Unlike many **precursors**, the contemporary style of winter outerwear is as much attractive as functional. (In this example, we can guess the meaning of the word ‘precursor’ partly because it is contrasted with ‘contemporary’, and partly by interpreting its word parts - ‘pre’ meaning ‘before’).

3. **Annotation:** Write notes in the margins of the article or book you are reading. You might include definitions, questions, or restatements of ideas in your own words. Also, **highlight** and underline key words, dates, ideas, citations, etc.
4. **Read *critically*:** Just because an idea is written down in a book doesn’t mean it is accurate, effective, or conclusive. Engage with what you are reading and ask questions.