

## **Strategies for Reading**

Academic texts can seem intimidating, especially for a student who has to balance coursework, assignments, and research. Sometimes reading academic texts can be confusing and time-consuming. While it might seem counterintuitive that reading something less thoroughly will help you to understand it better, academic writing is actually designed to be easily skimmed. One of the most effective ways to get through academic reading is to strategically choose which sections to focus on understanding. Here are some steps <sup>[1][2]</sup> you can take before, during, and after reading to help make the reading process easier:

### **Before Reading**

- How to figure out if a text will be useful
  - Think about why you are reading this text? Even if it is assigned by your professor, think about what you will learn from the text.
  - If you are doing research on your own, look for keywords to see if it might be useful to your research. Some texts might list keywords. If you have trouble finding topic sentences in a text, looking for keywords can be really helpful.
- Choose which sections to focus on
  - It is okay to skim or even skip over sections that are not going to be useful to you. Your time is important. Usually, the introduction and conclusion sections will touch on the major points of an article. For example, if you're writing a literature review on data collection methods, focusing on the methods section will be most important. However, if you're reading a paper for class, the introduction and discussion sections will likely have the information that will best prepare you to participate in class discussion. Make sure read any other sections that you think are important to understanding the article.
- Think about what you want to learn from a text or what questions you hope a text will answer. See if the text will answer any questions you have about the topic.

### **During Reading**

- Take notes and mark up the text so you can find important information later. If you take notes on a separate page, make sure to include page numbers so you can find it in the text later.
- Make a list of vocabulary words you don't know. Don't worry about defining every word unless it seems *really* important to the text.
- Ask questions as you read. Don't worry about stopping to answer every question as they come up, but take notes of the questions you have so you can go back to

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<sup>1</sup> *Academic Reading Strategies* (n.d.). <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/esl/resources/academic-reading-strategies/>

<sup>2</sup> Li, Shuyun and Hugh Munby. (1996). "Metacognitive Strategies in Second Language Academic Reading: A Qualitative Investigation," Vol. 15, No. 3, 199-216.

them later. These questions can also be a useful way to participate in class discussions.

### After Reading

- Write a short (2 sentence) summary of the text. This might make it easier for you to recall the purpose of a text later when you are going through sources to use in a piece of writing. Go through your notes and look up any supplemental information that you need:
  - Look up vocabulary words.
  - Look into any questions the text left unanswered.
- Sometimes it helps if you can talk to someone else who has read the text to check for comprehension.

### Clues in the Text

Sample Text <sup>3</sup>	Notes on Text
<p><b>“Many researchers have suggested</b> that focused attention is crucially important for learning throughout life—from the crib to the classroom and beyond...”.</p>	<p>The phrase “Many researchers have suggested” shows that the authors are setting the scene with the research that has already been done. It is important to know the background information if you need to focus on the current state of research on the topic.</p>
<p><b>“In this study, we investigated</b> whether the classroom visual environment can affect attention allocation and thereby affect learning in kindergarten children. It is well documented that distractibility decreases markedly with age”.</p>	<p>The phrase “In this study, we investigated...” allows the authors to explain how their research is relevant to the field. This also introduces what exactly they researched.</p>
<p>[From the “Discussion” section]</p> <p><b>“The present study yielded several novel findings.</b> First, the pattern of focused attention in kindergarten children changed as a function of the classroom visual environment”.</p>	<p>The phrase “The present study yielded several novel findings” indicates the final conclusions of the study. One can assume that the text that follows will be very important because it will explain the outcome of the study.</p>

<sup>3</sup> Fisher, Anna V. et al. (2014) “Visual Environment, Attention Allocation, and Learning in Young Children: When Too Much of a Good Thing May Be Bad,” *Psychological Science*, Vol. 25(7), 1362-1370.  
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