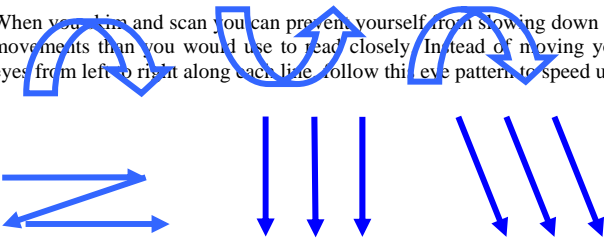


ACADEMIC READING

Becoming an Active Reader

<p>UNIVERSITY READING TASKS</p>	<p>Reading at university is very different from any other type of reading you may have done in the past. This is so because at university you have an enormous amount of material to read in a very short space of time. In addition, the material contains vocabulary and concepts which may be unfamiliar to you. The most effective way of coping with the volume of reading and of understanding and <i>remembering</i> what you read is by adopting active reading strategies. These strategies involve reading selectively, thinking about what you read and making informed choices in the use of reference sources.</p>
<p>ACTIVE READING STRATEGIES</p>	<p>In order to increase your reading speed, comprehension and retention you can adopt the following active reading strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read with a purpose in mind • Adjust your reading speed to suit the purpose • Preview the text before close reading • Look for main ideas in each paragraph • Use prior knowledge to understand new concepts • Study new words in context • Choose suitable dictionary sources
<p>READ WITH A PURPOSE</p>	<p>It is not always necessary to read <i>closely</i> everything in the textbook or other assigned reading when you are completing an assignment. Close reading of academic texts is a slow, time-consuming activity so you need to be selective and read closely only the sections which are <i>relevant</i> to your task. To determine which sections are relevant you need to analyse the assignment question. You can then use speed-reading techniques to locate the relevant text quickly.</p> <p>Analyse the Assignment Question</p> <p>In order to determine what the assignment is about and therefore which areas you need to cover in your reading, look for key words in the assignment topic. Look at the following assignment question:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Explain how notions of gender inform the way in which people perceive the roles of men and women in New Zealand society.</i></p>

	<p>You can identify several areas that you need to cover in your reading for this assignment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic words tell you what the assignment is <i>about</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - influence of notions (views) of gender - roles of men and women - New Zealand society • Task words: verbs or verb phrases that tell you what you have to <i>do</i> with the information in the assignment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - explain how <p>Once you have determined the key areas of the assignment, you need to locate relevant text in your reading sources. To do this <i>quickly</i> you can use two speed-reading techniques: SCANNING and SKIMMING.</p>
<p>SCANNING THE TEXT TO LOCATE RELEVANT INFORMATION</p>	<p>How do you scan the text? If you've looked up a name and number in a telephone book, then you've used the speed-reading technique known as scanning. You have a specific name in your mind and you run your finger down the column of names until you find the one you're looking for. Then you stop and read the information next to it. You will use the same technique when you need to look for a specific date or a specific word or phrase in a text. When you scan the text, keep the key words of the assignment firmly in your mind and run your eyes down the page until you find a word that relates to your topic.</p> <p>Which parts of the text should you scan?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Table of Contents If you're looking through a book for relevant material, start off by scanning the Table of Contents at the beginning of the book. Remember that the titles chapter titles or article titles featured in the Table of Contents will not always feature the <i>exact words</i> contained in the assignment topic. You also need to look out for words or phrases <i>related</i> to the topic. • The Index of the Text The Index of a text provides alphabetical lists of key words and phrases from the text and the page numbers where these words and phrases are featured. • The Text Itself Once you have an indication of page numbers where you might find relevant text, you can scan the pages themselves. However, you need to make sure that you don't slow down your reading speed at this point. In speed-reading text to locate specific information (as opposed to <i>close reading</i> for

	<p>meaning in the text), you want to cover the whole text in a very short time. In order to do this you need to adjust the way your eyes move across the page.</p>
<p>EYE MOVEMENTS FOR SCANNING</p>	<p>When you read closely, you move your eyes from left to right across the page, line by line. This technique slows you to a pace necessary for understanding the meaning of the text. The purpose of scanning, on the other hand, is to help you find relevant information <i>quickly</i> – you should be able to scan a text at about 800 to 1000 words a minute. In order to prevent your reading speed slowing down during scanning, use different eye movements than you would for close reading.</p> <p>Use different eye movements for scanning</p> <p>Until you find the information you are seeking, you want to avoid slowing down to read closely. Consequently, you should not move your eyes from left to right across the page, line by line, or you may find yourself reading closely. Instead, <i>cover the page</i> by using one of the eye movements given below:</p> <p>When you skim and scan you can prevent yourself from slowing down by using different eye movements than you would use to read closely. Instead of moving your eyes from left to right along each line, follow this eye pattern to speed up your reading.</p> 
<p>SKIMMING THE TEXT FOR AN OVERVIEW</p>	<p>Skimming is another valuable speed-reading technique to use at university. When you skim a text you look at certain features of the text which provide a clear overview of the <i>content</i> and <i>structure</i> of the text. This will help you to choose suitable reference material for an assignment. It will also <i>activate your prior knowledge</i> of the concepts discussed and this will help you to read actively and efficiently.</p> <p>How do you skim a text?</p> <p>In order to get an overview of a text, you skim it as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the title and sub-titles <p>The title of a text shows you the subject of the text and the sub-titles reveal what the writer will focus on in the text (the main ideas). This helps you to decide whether or not the text will be suitable for your assignment. Again, remember that the title and sub-titles of a text will not always feature the <i>exact words</i> contained in the assignment topic. You also need to look out for words or phrases <i>related</i> to the topic.</p>

	<p><i>What if there are no titles and sub-titles?</i></p> <p>Textbooks usually feature sections with clear titles and sub-titles. However in some of your books and readings there will be no section titles and sub-titles, or very few of them. In this case you can skim through the paragraphs, looking only at the first and last sentences. The first sentence of most paragraphs, the topic sentence, introduces the main idea in the paragraph. The last sentence usually either summarises the main idea or leads into the subject of the next paragraph</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the introduction to the text Sometimes a writer will provide a list of main ideas in the introduction, so watch out for this. The main ideas are often mentioned in the last few lines of the introductory paragraph. • Examine illustrations, graph headings Like title and sub-titles, these provide easy and quick clues to the main ideas of the text. • Examine summaries at the end of the text Sometimes writers provide a summary to end sections or chapters. This is often presented in the form of a concluding paragraph or in points.
<p>ACTIVATING YOUR PRIOR KNOWLEDGE</p>	<p>In order to understand the writer’s message in a text, the reader needs to share a certain amount of knowledge with the writer of academic texts. For one thing, the reader must understand the language used by the writer. The reader must also be familiar with the way in which writers organize their information - in sentences, in paragraphs, in chapters, in graphs and tables, etc. Finally, the reader must share a certain amount of world knowledge with the writer in order to understand the meaning of a text.</p> <p>Thus the reader brings to the text a certain amount of prior knowledge. You need to use this prior knowledge to help you understand new concepts in the text. In other words, you need to use what you already know to help you understand new material. Skimming the text helps you to activate your prior knowledge as you begin thinking about the main ideas and making connections with what you already know <i>before</i> you start your close reading of the text.</p>
<p>CLOSE READING FOR MEANING</p>	<p>Once you have gained an overview of the relevant text, you are ready to begin your close reading of the text. Here your reading pace will slow down a great deal as you make your way through dense text and unfamiliar terminology. Your main object in reading is to identify and understand the important ideas in the text. The density of academic text</p>

	<p>often makes it difficult for the reader to follow the writer's train of thought. However, with some prior knowledge about the structure of academic text you will find it easier to follow what the writer is saying.</p>
<p>UNDERSTANDING TEXT STRUCTURE</p>	<p>Introductory Section Most texts you read will begin with an introductory paragraph or introductory section. A writer uses an introduction to <i>introduce</i> the reader to the subject (or topic) of the text and the focus of the text (what the writer is going to say about that subject).</p> <p>Examine the following introductory paragraph:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">In this section we will be looking at how our society creates specific roles and expectations for men and women respectively. We make distinctions between men and women based on certain biological features. For example, only women can conceive and give birth to babies; thus the role of <i>child-bearing</i> is natural for women. However, the expectation that women, rather than men, should be the main <i>care-givers</i> of children is not based on the realities of biological difference. This kind of gender-specific expectation is created and sustained by the major social institutions of our society – our families, our schools, our religions, and our media.</p> <p>This introductory paragraph tells us that the broad subject of the text is going to be the creation of gender-specific roles for men and women. The writer is going to focus on four main social institutions in this regard: the family, schools, religions, and the media. You can expect that the rest of the text will deal with each of these institutions in turn and explain how they create specific roles and expectations for men and women respectively.</p> <p>Main Body of the Text The main body of any text consists of paragraphs that develop the subject and focus. These paragraphs consist of :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • main ideas • supporting ideas (such as reasons and examples) to develop and support the main ideas • transitions (connecting material between the ideas in the text) <p>A writer uses supporting material to develop main ideas, and links all the ideas in the text by means of transitions. As a reader you need to be able to recognise a main idea, understand how supporting material is used to develop this idea, and use the transitions in the text to help you follow the writer's line of thought. Some understanding of basic paragraph structure will help you to achieve this.</p>

<p>PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE</p>	<p>1. Find the main idea Paragraphs usually have one main idea which is developed through the paragraph. A writer will often put the main idea of a paragraph in the <i>first sentence</i> of the paragraph. We call the sentence which contains the main idea, the topic sentence of the paragraph. The rest of the paragraph develops and supports this main idea.</p> <p>The following paragraph follows on from the Introduction above. The topic sentence has been underlined for you:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><u>In the family, children learn from a young age that certain behaviour is appropriate to boys and girls respectively.</u> For example, little girls are encouraged to play with dolls and prams and other toys associated with child-care and domestic work. Boys, on the other hand, are often given toys such as construction sets and tools – toys associated with the working world. Thus the family is one of the institutions in society that reinforces specific gender roles for boys and girls.</p> <p>Here the writer makes the point that the family (one of the social institutions mentioned in the Introduction) teaches boys and girls different behaviour to prepare them for different roles in life. The writer supports or develops this point using examples from family life.</p> <p>2. Use the supporting ideas to help you understand the main idea</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writers use supporting ideas to clarify main ideas for the reader. • Supporting material is usually the easiest part of the text to understand because the writer often uses examples, illustrations and anecdotes which are likely to be familiar to the reader (such as the toys in the example above). • Use the supporting material to create a clear picture in your mind of the writer’s main point. This will help you to understand and remember the main point. <p>3. Use transitions and other connecting material to guide you through the text</p> <p>In the paragraph above, the writer signals that she is going to be providing an <i>example</i> by using the phrase ‘for example’.</p> <p>Later in the paragraph she signals to the reader that she is going to be showing a point of <i>contrast</i>, by using the transition phrase ‘on the other hand.’ Transition words and phrases in a text act like road signals – they help the reader to follow the direction of the text. Some of the transition phrases that you will encounter in your texts function as follows:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead you from a main idea to supporting ideas Examples of these are: <i>for instance; for example; specifically; to illustrate.</i> • Signal the end of the section or the end of a chapter Examples of these are: <i>to conclude; in summary; finally; in brief; let me end with.</i> • Change the point of view Writers use transitional words or phrases to signal a change of direction in the argument which the text has been developing. For example, in the Introductory paragraph on gender-specific roles the writer makes the point that although <i>child-bearing</i> is natural for women (rather than men), the role of care-giver to children is not the natural role of women only. She signals the change of direction in her argument with the transition word ‘however’: <p style="padding-left: 40px;">...only women can conceive and give birth to babies; thus the role of <i>child-bearing</i> is natural for women. However, the expectation that women, rather than men, should be the main <i>care-givers</i> of children is not based on the realities of biological difference.</p> <p>These words and phrases are also used to signal a point of contrast. Other examples are: <i>but; however; nevertheless; nonetheless.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw a conclusion about something In the extract above, the writer uses the word ‘thus’ to signal to the reader her conclusion that the role of child-bearing is natural for women since only they can conceive and bear children. She could also have used words and phrases like: <i>therefore; it follows therefore that; we may conclude therefore that.</i> • Function as listing signals Many writers make the ideas in a text stand out by numbering them <i>first; second; third; or firstly; secondly; etc.</i> Or <i>firstly</i> may be followed by <i>next</i> or <i>in addition; etc.</i> <p>NOTE: Draw a box around the transitions as you read and use them to help you follow the writer’s train of thought.</p>
VOCABULARY	<p>Do you need to look up every unfamiliar word? Increasing your knowledge of vocabulary is an important part of your study. The larger your vocabulary, the more effectively you will read. However, given the limited time available for reading at university, you cannot look up <i>every</i> word. You need to focus on those words which are important</p>

	<p>to your understanding of the text:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the word is used often in the text then you clearly need to know the meaning in order to understand the text. • If the word appears in titles or sub-titles then it is essential that you understand the meaning of the word <i>before</i> you start reading the text. • If the word is presented in bold print or in italics, it is likely to be an important word. Writers often use italics to present words that they want to stress and bold print for essential terminology in a subject. It is crucial that you build up a working knowledge of technical vocabulary in the subject that you're studying. <p>Can you work out the meaning of the word from the context? Before you reach for your dictionary, try to work out the meaning of new words from the context of the sentence or the paragraph that they're featured in.</p>
<p>TECHNICAL VOCABULARY</p>	<p>Instructors of any subject use specialised or technical vocabulary to talk about or write about their subject. For example, a Physics textbook will use the term momentum and a Psychology textbook will use the term neurosis. In textbooks, writers often draw attention to technical terms by presenting them in bold print or sometimes in italics. You can often find explanations for these technical terms in the textbooks themselves:</p> <p>Find explanations in the text Writers will often introduce explanations of terms within the text itself.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look out for sentences or phrases which indicate an explanation in the text. <u>Examples:</u> `that is`; `in other words`; `this refers to` • Sometimes the writer will use punctuation such as parentheses, dashes or commas to indicate a definition. Look at the following example where the writer has used dashes to include a definition of the term <i>gender</i> in the sentence. The literature points out that gender - the socially constructed identity of men and women – is linked to biological difference but not determined by it. • Explanations of technical terms are sometimes provided in the margins of a text or in boxes around

	<p>the text</p> <p>Glossary of the text Explanations for technical terms are also provided in the glossary at the back of text books.</p> <p>Index of the text As indicated previously, the index of the text – usually located at the back of the book- points you to pages where the term in question is used. There will be a number of pages listed and you should start with those listed in bold print because these will be the pages where you are likely to find a definition of the term.</p> <p>Subject Dictionaries These dictionaries provide definitions of terms used in different subject areas such as Economics and Nursing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can find subject dictionaries in the REFERENCE COLLECTION section of the library (Level 1). • These dictionaries are grouped according to their subject areas. • If you go to the Information Desk on Level 1 of the library you will be given a Call Number to help you locate the relevant dictionary. Some examples are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Business Studies R658 - Computers R004 - Economic R330 - Psychology R150 <p>There are also a number of subject dictionaries available on the Massey University library website. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Oxford Reference Online</u> • <u>Your Dictionary.com</u> – which links to 86 subject dictionaries <p>You can access dictionaries through the library website: http://library.massey.ac.nz/findit/onlinereferenceresources.htm</p> <p>NOTE: Some Courses list recommended particular conceptual references in their subject guides. Make sure that you use the recommended source listed in the subject guide for that subject.</p>
GENERAL ACADEMIC VOCABULARY	In addition to subject-specific vocabulary you will also need to build up an extensive vocabulary of words that are used frequently in academic texts.

	<p>Printed Dictionaries Students need to own and use a good general dictionary throughout their studies. The library also has a large collection of general dictionaries including the following two which are suitable for use at University:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Collins Cobuild Dictionary</i> • <i>The Reed Dictionary of New Zealand English</i> <p>You can find the general dictionaries in the REFERENCES COLLECTION on level 1 of the library. Look under the Call Number R423.</p> <p>Online Dictionaries There are also general dictionaries resources available on the Massey Website. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cambridge Dictionaries Online • Thesaurus.com • YourDictionary.com <p>NOTE: You should be aware that some of the dictionaries available on-line are <i>American</i> dictionaries, with American spelling of words.</p> <p>Academic Word Lists Several researchers have published lists of the vocabulary most commonly use in academic texts. You can use these lists to build up your own reference source for your reading. The following are two university websites which will allow you access to academic word lists:</p> <p><i>Source 1</i> http://www.latrobe.edu.au/lasu/eslresour/vocab.html</p> <p><i>Source 2</i> http://www.vuw.ac.nz/lala/staff/averil-coxhead/awl/info.html</p>
<p>USE WHAT YOU'VE ALREADY READ TO UNDERSTAND NEW MATERIAL</p>	<p>The prior knowledge that you bring to any new text includes what you've already read in the text. Many textbooks present knowledge in a <i>cumulative</i> way which means that any chapter or section you read prepares you for the next chapter or section. Make sure that you <i>go back</i> to what you've read previously and preview the main ideas before you move on to another section or another chapter.</p>
<p>EXPECT TO READ TEXTS SEVERAL TIMES</p>	<p>Don't panic if you don't understand your academic texts the first time you read them! As you build up your knowledge of terminology and concepts in a subject you will begin to understand the material you read more quickly. For</p>

	<p>now however, you should be prepared to read the material several times before you begin to understand it.</p>
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