Study skills at Wolfson

Reading

Dr John Field

Outline

- ◆ Organising reading
- ◆ How we read. Some myths about reading
- ◆ Before reading
- ◆ Staged reading
- ◆ Storing information

Some conclusions from last week

- It is pointless to read for too long at a time
- Read with a goal
- Revisit the important ideas
- Take time to think about the ideas in depth and to link them
- Space out your reviews of what you have read.

Planning your reading

- **PRE-READING**: Consider title /abstract or intro./
  Consider reading aims

- **HOUR 1**:   Clearly defined piece of reading [Marginal notes]

  BREAK 1: (10 mins)

  REVIEW 1: Write Notes 1   [Collate marginal notes]

- **HOUR 2**: Second piece of reading

  BREAK 2: (10 mins)

  REVIEW 2: Re-read Notes 1. Write Notes 2.

Reinforcing your reading

NEXT DAY

DAILY REVIEW: Recall Notes 1, 2, 3...

Reread Notes 1, 2 and 3

.

REVIEW DAY **(weekly)**

RE-READ: Notes for preceding week

How fast do you read?

- Average reading speed is said to be around 250 – 300 words per minute.
- [This is much faster than we speak].

Why not take a speed reading course?

'This audio book will make you a **speed reading** genius in a few hours'

'Independent Research Confirms Top **Speed Reading** Software'

'Instant results for *reading speed* and comprehension level.'

'… find out how to beat information overload, and *read* much, much more in the time you have available'.

'Understand this simple idea and your *reading speed* will improve significantly'.

Aren't you envious?

- ◆ In the World Championship Speed Reading Competition top contestants are said to read around 1000 to 2000 words per minute with approximately 50% comprehension.

- ◆ Howard Berg claims to be the fastest reader in the world reading at a rate of 25,000 words per minute.

What speed reading courses tell you

- Good readers read blocks of words, not single ones
- Good readers do not need to read every word
- Fast readers recognise words by overall shape
- Fast readers subvocalise
- You can read fast without loss of comprehension

What speed reading courses tell you

- Good readers read blocks of words. not single ones. X
- Good readers do not need to read every word; they use context to guess much of a text.   X
- Good readers recognise words by overall shape.   X
- Good readers subvocalise. X
- You can read fast without loss of comprehension. X

Skilld vs unskilled readers

367 200 434 200

makes the short wave enthusiast resort to the

267 100 200 233 166

study of such seemingly unrelated subjects as

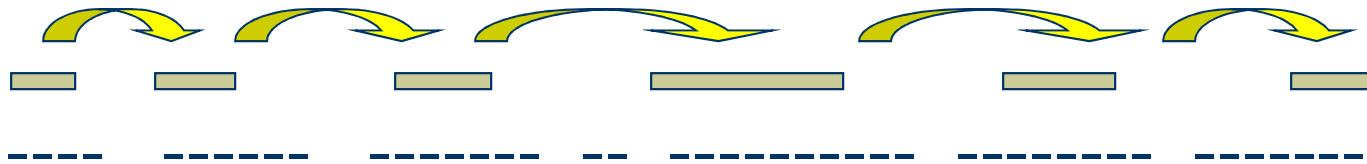333 267 267 100

geography, chronology, topography and even

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makes the short wave enthusiast resort to the

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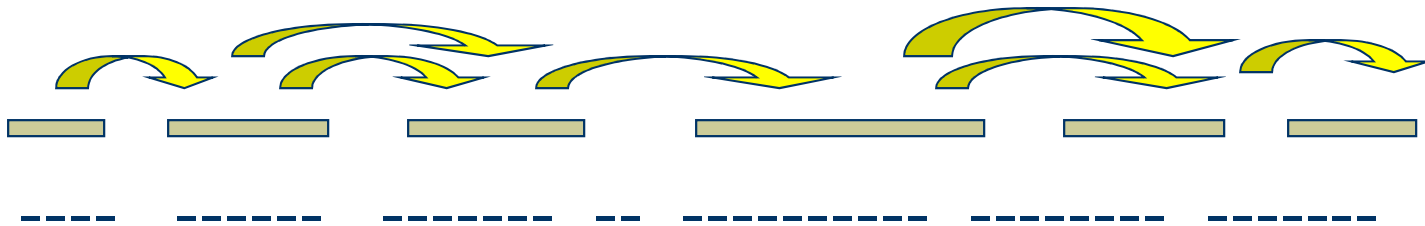433 367 667 999 600 200

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1,067 1,134 2,065 233 367

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Evidence from eye tracking

- ◆ Skilled reader

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- ◆ Unskilled reader

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About 80% of content words and 40% of function words are fixated.

The truth about recognising words

- In reading, we focus on nearly every word (except some short function words)

- A good reader is somebody who recognises words automatically (rapidly and accurately). In doing so, we take account of every feature of the word.

- If you find you are back tracking a lot, ask yourself: Am I checking my understanding or am I checking to be sure I have recognised the words?

How do we skip function words?

- Efficient readers pay reduced attention to function words and often to not fixate them.

- They manage to do so because

- a. function words are frequent and therefore easily recognised

- b. function words are short and can be recognised in advance as the eye travels to the right across the page
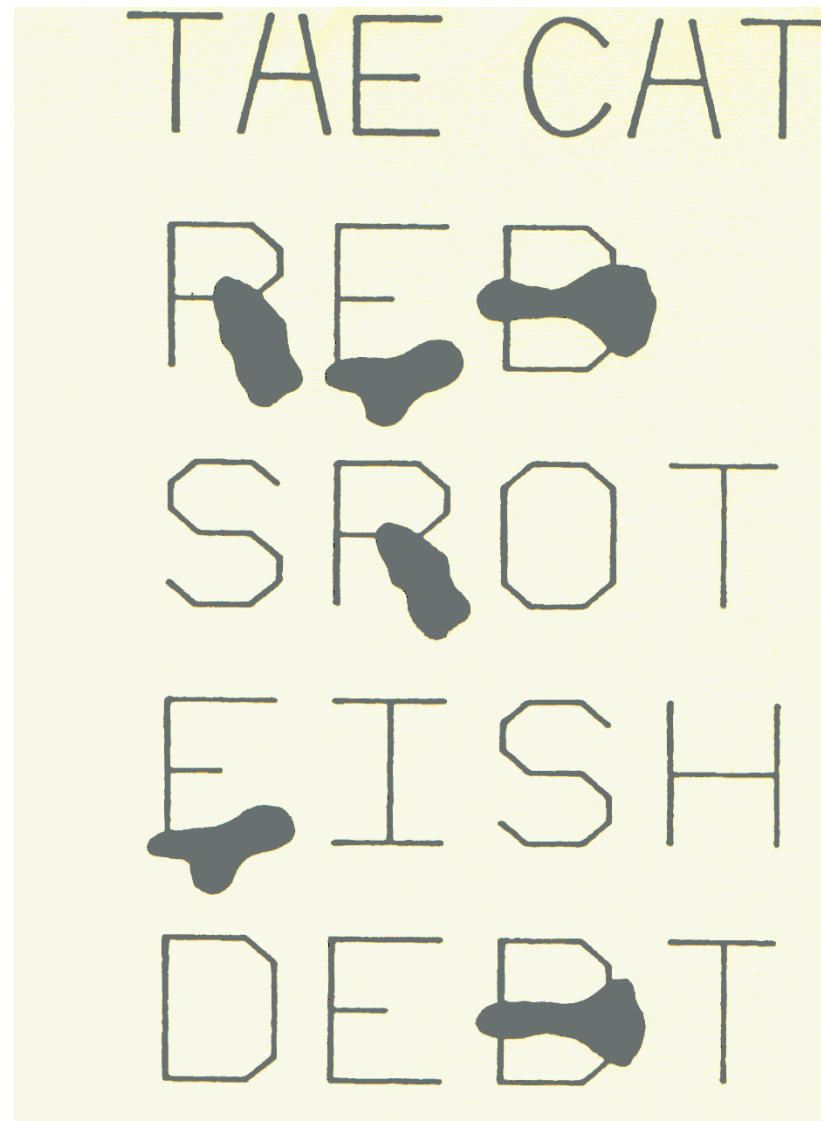
Word shapes?

◆ Aoccdrnig to a rscheearch at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it deosn't mttaer in waht oredr the ltteers in a wrod are,the olny iprmoetnt tihng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer be at the rghit pclae. The rset can be a total mses and you can sitll raed it wouthit porbelm. Tihs is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe.

How true is the assertion?

- Adicnorcg to a rechreesar at Cigmarbde Uveintrisy, it denos't metratr in waht oderr the lteerts in a wrod are,the olny intorpamt tnihg is taht the fsrit and lsat lteetr be at the rhigt pacle. The rset can be a ttaol mses and you can slitl raed it whotuit pleborm. Tihs is buscaee the haumn mnid deos not raed eervy lteetr by ilstef, but the wrod as a wlohe.

Word level effects
(McClelland & Rumelhardt, 1986)

'Efficient readers recognise words by their shapes'

What words do you think the typist intended?

- REVENCE
- LOMELY
- REVENOE
- LOYELY

- a. STRANCE   COMEORT   APRIVE
- b. GRADEN   DOMETSIC   RUBGLARY
- c. SHEORY   THEERFUL   SHOLKING

'Efficient readers recognise words by their shapes,'

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The Stroop test (Stroop, 1935)

- red
- blue
- yellow
- black
- orange
- white
- green
- purple
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21

The truth about comprehension

- It is possible (with RSVP) to achieve very high reading speeds
- BUT comprehension suffers
- BUT they cannot be sustained for long
- A good reader is somebody who adjusts his/her reading speed to the purpose for reading.

Depth of reading
(Rayner & Pollatsek, 1989: 118)

TEXT	Fixation time	Saccade length	Regression (%)	Speed wpm
1	202	9.2	3	365
2	209	8.3	6	321
3	220	7.9	10	305
4	261	6.9	17	238

A reading task

The man who has just come into the shop to rent a video bears on his identity card a most unusual name, a name with a classical flavour that time has staled, neither more nor less than Tertuliano Maximo Afonso. The Maximo and the Afonso, which are in more common usage, he can just about tolerate, depending on the mood he's in, but the Tertuliano weighs on him like a gravestone…

J.Saramago (2005): *The Double*

Conclusions

- Good readers fixate almost every word, though they manage to anticipate short, highly frequent functors. No point in eye movement exercises.

- What distinguishes a slow reader is not short eye movements but many regressions. Good reading is heavily dependent upon automatic and accurate decoding,

- Word recognition takes place at many levels of detail and comes from extended exposure

- Speed of itself should not be not a goal in reading. Instead, it should be the command of a range of L2 reading speeds and the ability to match them to a) text type b) reader goals.

Selective reading

- Use books as a resource. Do not feel that you need to read them from cover to cover

- Start with a clear idea of what you want to find out.

- Use the index. Read only the relevant pages.

- For journals always start with the abstract.

- Skim the pages / abstract before reading to be sure that they tell you what you are looking for,

- Use a book's references. Follow up the titles that the author seems to think are important.

Levels of reading

Skimming

Scanning

Reading for argument

Focused reading

Depth reading

Reading techniques 1: SQ3R

- **SURVEY**: General idea of what text covers
- **QUESTION:** Construct own questions
- **READING**: No notes
- **RECALL**: Think. Write down.

    [REHEARSAL]

- **REVIEW**: Check notes against text

    [Robinson, 1946, Rowntree, 1988]

Reviewing the title

Rapid increase in speed of verbal processing by 2nd year infants

1. What do you expect to read?
2. What questions do you have?

Skim

- Read first paragraph.
- Look at the graphic.
- Look at the sub-headings
- Read the first sentence of each paragraph.
- Read the last paragraph

Scan

Find answers to these questions fast:

- ◆ 1. What were the three groups?
- ◆ 2. What method was used?
- ◆ 3. What words were used in the test?
- ◆ 4. Did the infants respond like adults?
- ◆ 5. What was the most important finding?
- ◆ 6. Did the younger infants have trouble co-ordinating their eye movements?

Skimming

a. Is it relevant?

b. If so, where is the information located?

- Look at title, look at graphics
- Run your finger down the middle of the page
- Look at bold type, italics
- Look at sub-headings
- Look at first sentence of each para.
- Look at final paragraph

Scanning

a. What do I expect this text to be about?

b. What do I want to find out?

c. What has skimming shown me of interest?

- Look for key words and what is said about them
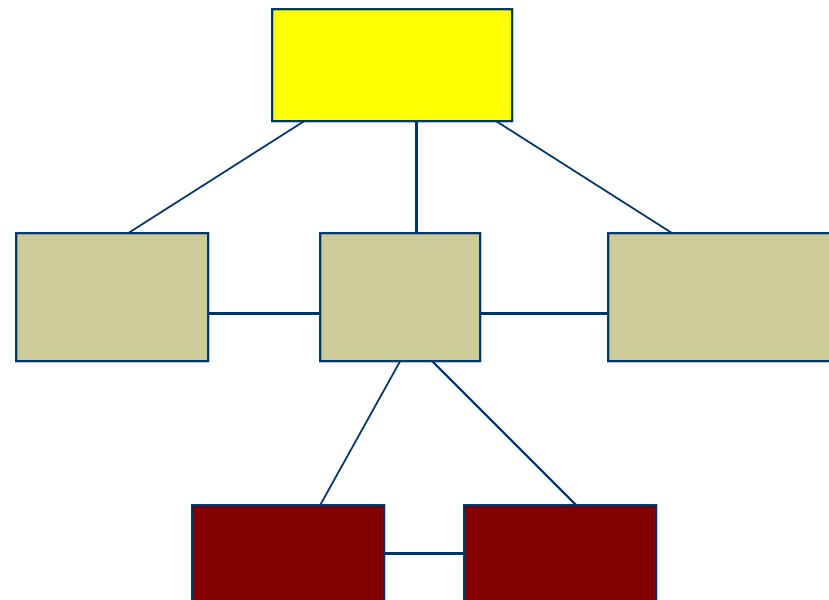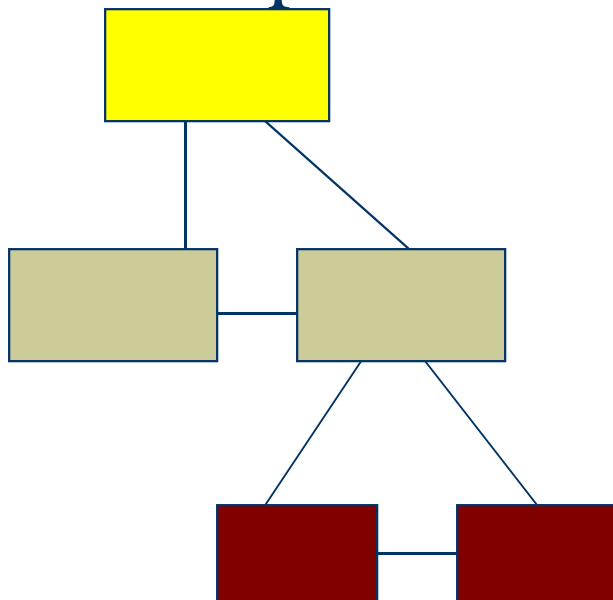- Read short sections to find the facts you need (use sub-headings)

Reading for argument

a. What are the main points made?

b. What logic links the points?

- Assess importance of topic sentences
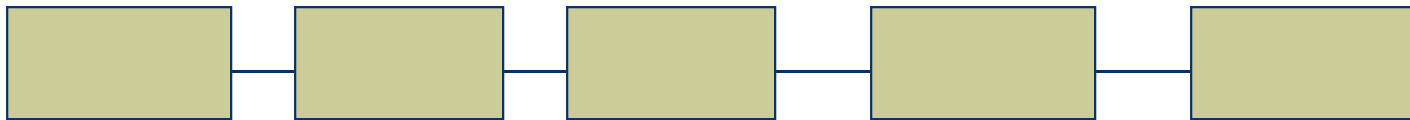- Look for linkers at beginning of para.
- Imagine links between paragraphs

Gernsbacher's structure building hypothesis (1990)

Good comprehender

Gernsbacher's structure building hypothesis
(1990)

Poor comprehender

- a. cannot recognise when a meaning structure is complete and a new structure must be initiated
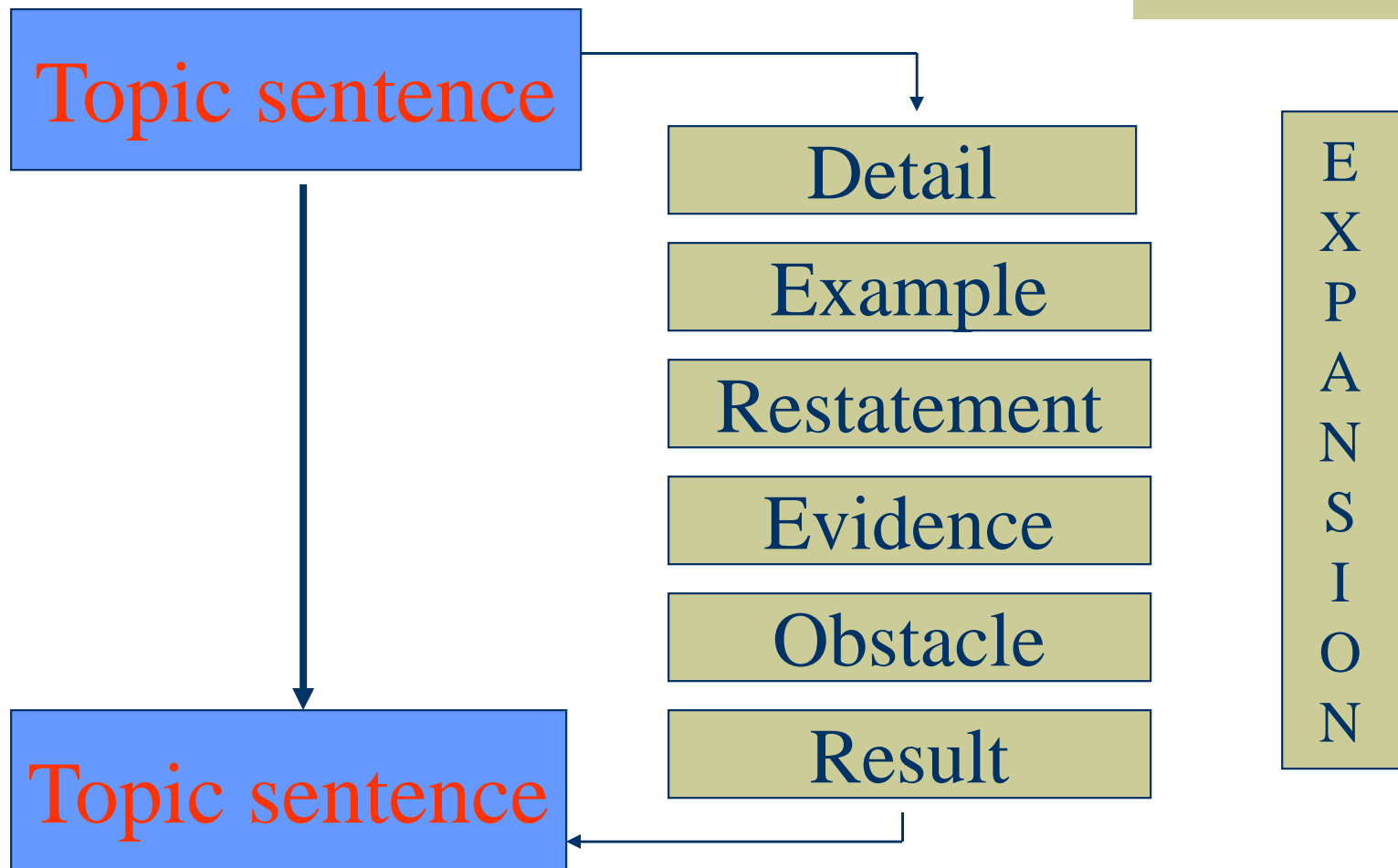- b. Cannot recognise the different levels of importance and dependency among pieces of information

Tracing links

- 1T.Studying the course of word-recognition in infants requires a technique that has minimal task demands…
- 1E. Because infants tend to look at a familiar object when it is named, longer looking … has been used as a measure of word recognition
- 3T Subjects were 72 infants from monolingual English-speaking families in a predominantly middle-class population
- 3E. We tested 24 infants in each of three age groups: 15 months…, 18 months … and 24 months.

Tracing links

- 4T. The auditory stimuli consisted of sentences containing four target words.
- 4E. The four target words were similar in duration…and were presented in the same two carrier frames.
- 7T A preliminary analysis verified that infants in each age group demonstrated recognition of the target words.
- 7E. … we found that infants looked significantly more at the target objects than at the distractor objects.
- 10T These findings reveal that infants, like adults, respond spontaneously to a familiar word by fixing the visual referent…
- 10E Moreover, during their 2nd year, infants make dramatic gains in speed and efficiency in understanding familiar words in continuous speech.

Paragraph structure

Topic sentence

Detail

Example

Restatement

Evidence

Obstacle

Result

Topic sentence

E X P A N S I O N

Note-taking from reading
'Why am I taking notes?'

- For future reference

  Neat notes.

  Worth rewriting / organising them.

  Use key words as cues.

- To fix the facts / ideas in my mind

  Brainstorm **after** reading, then check.

- To help me organise my ideas as I read

  Write during a second reading, and review.

  Add headings afterwards.

Note-taking from reading
'Why am I taking notes?'

◆ To provide material for an assignment

   Mark the text selectively (if it is yours); use a system of codes

   Use Post-Its for important sections

   Summarise the text in 3-4 bullet points

◆ To review the field

   List important references to follow up at once

◆ To revise for an exam

   Brainstorm after reading. Summarise in 5-6 bullet points. Revisit after two days and after a week.

Writing about your reading

- Distinguish primary and secondary sources.
- Distinguish ideas from findings.
- Distinguish major and minor ideas.
- When mentioning a major idea, be sure that you understood it correctly. If in doubt., check.
- Make sure you understand connections between ideas as well as ideas.
- Be selective. 'Is this relevant to the question?'
- Support what you say with examples and references
- Be critical – but don't be rash.

Keeping track of your reading

- While at Cambridge you will be expected to do large amounts of reading. You will need to keep careful references to what you have read or you will find that

- a. you keep retrieving papers you have already read

- b. (worse) you start re-reading papers

Setting up a resources file

- Open a new document on your PC
- Brainstorm major sub-areas within your field and type them as titles which clearly specify the category
- Put them in alphabetical order and number them
- Add to your set of titles whenever you read a paper that seems to fall into a new category

Recording your reading

- Use your list of categories as a master index.

- Copy it. Under each heading, list every paper you read that falls under that heading (sometimes a paper will fall under more than one)

- In addition, list all the papers you read separately. Keep them in alphabetical order. After the name of the paper, add the number(s) of the section(s) that it falls into. Add a code to indicate if you have a photocopy or online copy.

- Take care when listing these references. If they are 100% accurate you will be able to cut and paste them

Useful websites

- www.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/studyskills
- www.adprima.com/studyout.htm
- www.studygs.net
- www.ucc.vt.edu/stdyhlp.html

Further reading

- Cottrell, S. 2008. *The Study Skills Handbook*. Palgrave Macmillan, 3rd edn.

- Davies, M. (2011) *Study Skills for International Postgraduates*, Palgrave Macmillan. Good on record keeping. Ignore chapter on reading – it's not well informed.