

# Reading Strategies

## Different Types of Reading

Each time you read, you're reading for a different purpose. This means your focus will change, the amount of time spent will vary, and what you do with what you have read will be different each time. You will need to know the purpose of your reading before you begin. Are you reading:

- For background knowledge?
- To identify problems to work on?
- To understand a concept or a methodology?
- To gathering specific facts or data?
- To finding alternative views to an argument?

## Quick read

Read the text once all the way through without stopping—no highlighting or note taking! Just get familiar with the concepts and learn where the author is coming from.

## In-depth read

This will take more time and you may have to re-read sections to fully understand them. Read in-depth to comprehend ideas, identify the author's main argument and find key points that are useful to your research. It can be helpful to read one section at a time, and re-read difficult sections the next day. Ensure you make annotations on the document or notes, so you don't forget your thoughts!

## Critical read

Critical reading raises questions. You may consider things such as: the validity of the evidence that the author used for their argument; when the text was published; how the research was funded; author bias; the strengths, weaknesses and limitations of the text; if the language was emotive or objective; the currency of the text; and how the text relates to other literature on the same topic.

Ask yourself: How do these ideas connect with your ideas? Do these ideas confirm or challenge your beliefs? How do these ideas relate to other research? How do these ideas inform your research? Do you now have new questions to pursue?

## SQ3R Strategy

This strategy is made up of 5 steps. In each step the reader becomes more deeply engaged with the literature.

**Step 1: Survey.** Skim and scan the literature. Scan over the headings, quickly read the abstract, introduction and conclusion, and have a look at diagrams and tables. Next, skim read the topic sentences of each paragraph. This step gives you an idea of what to expect in the text.

**Step 2: Questions.** Time to ask yourself things like 'how does this relate to my research?'; 'Does this text contribute to my research topic?'; 'What do I already know about this text?'; 'What questions do I have that have not been answered?' This step helps you make connections between the text and your research project.

**Step 3: Read.** There are several ways to read the text. You can read quickly—skimming over the text to get the general idea and the author's position, you can read in depth—to comprehend the text and identify key arguments relevant to your research, or you can read critically—to question the significance, relevance and currency of the text and to analyse its strengths and weaknesses.

**Step 4: Recite.** This is where you respond to those questions you had in step 2. You also summarise the text in your own words and decide how you feel and think about the text in relation to your research. This step helps to cement your understanding of what you've read.

**Step 5: Review.** Read over your summaries and consider if you now have the information you need for your own research. Could you now explain what you have read to a friend?

## Manage your time and achieve your reading goals

Set yourself realistic timeframes for reading large or complex texts. It may take a few hours to read one high quality text. You may wish to set aside blocks of reading time across a week instead of trying to cram too much into one big session. Experiment with different times or day to find what works for you.

Academic Learning Support offer free individual consultations and group workshops for HDR students. For more writing, study, and academic support contact [learningsupport@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:learningsupport@newcastle.edu.au) or call 02 4921 5350.