

How you Read Academic Texts?

Introduction:

Completing reading assignments, thesis, reviews, book chapters ... is one of the biggest challenges in academia. However, are you managing your reading efficiently? Consider this cooking analogy, noting the differences in process:

Adam has to make dinner. He goes to the store and walks through every aisle. He decides to make spaghetti, so he revisits aisles and reads many packages thoroughly before deciding which groceries to buy. Once he arrives home, he finds a recipe for spaghetti, but needs to go back to the store for ingredients he forgot.

Taylor also has to make dinner. He wants lots of carbohydrates because he's running a marathon soon so he decides to make spaghetti. After checking some recipes, he makes a list of ingredients. At the grocery store, he skims aisles to find his ingredients and chooses products that meet his diet.

Taylor's process was **more efficient** because **his purpose was clear**. Establishing **why you are reading** something will help you decide **how to read it**, which **saves time** and **improves comprehension**. This guide lists some purposes for reading as well as different strategies to try at different stages of the reading process.

1. *Purposes for reading:*

People read different kinds of text (e.g., scholarly articles, textbooks, reviews) for different reasons. Some purposes for reading might be

- to scan for specific information
- to skim to get an overview of the text
- to relate new content to existing knowledge
- to write something (often depends on a prompt)
- to critique an argument
- to learn something
- for general comprehension

2. *Strategies:*

Strategies differ from reader to reader. The same reader may use different strategies for different contexts because their purpose for reading changes. Ask yourself **“why am I reading?”** and **“what am I reading?”** when deciding which strategies to try.

A. **Before reading**

- Establish your purpose for reading
- Speculate about the author’s purpose for writing
- Review what you already know and want to learn about the topic
- Preview the text to get an overview of its structure, looking at headings, figures, tables, glossary, etc.
- Predict the contents of the text and pose questions about it... If the authors have provided discussion questions, read them and write them on a note-taking sheet.
- Note any discussion questions that have been provided (sometimes at the end of the text)
- Use the pre-reading guides – K-W-L guide, table 1

KWL guide		
K(what you already know)	W (what do you want to know)	L (what you have learned from the text)

Table 1 KWL guide

B. During reading

- Annotate and mark sections of the text to easily recall important or interesting ideas
- Check your predictions and find answers to posed questions
- Use headings and transition words to identify relationships in the text
- **Create a vocabulary list of other unfamiliar words to define later**
- Connect the text to what you already know about the topic
- Take breaks (split the text into segments if necessary)

C. After reading

- Summarize the text in your own words (note what you learned, impressions, and reactions)
- Talk to someone about the author's ideas to check your comprehension
- Identify and reread difficult parts of the text
- **Define words on your vocabulary list** and **practice using them**

References:

1-Academic Reading Strategies, “ University of North Carolina”

2-Reading skills for academic study, “University of Exeter”