Academic Reading Strategies

Key terms

- Predicting
- Surveying
- Text genre recognition
- Skimming
- Scanning
- Guessing unknown words
- Reading for detail
- Annotating text
- Main idea / subsidiary ideas
- Credible / Limitations / evidence
- Author's stance
- Reader's stance
- Summarising

Explanation of terms

- **Prediction**

Looking over the text title, headings, pictures and diagrams to anticipate what the text will be about based on the reader's prior knowledge.

- **Surveying**

Looking over the text to see how it is divided into sections: abstract, introduction, graphs, data, conclusion, reference lists, and further reading.

- **Text genre recognition**

What type of text is it? Case study, SWOT analysis, report, argument, overview of recent and past findings.

- **Skimming**

Read a text / section quickly to gain the basic idea; this can be done in a number of ways.
1. Reading the first two sentences and last sentence of each paragraph.
2. Reading 2-3 words of each line down the middle of a paragraph.
3. Reading the introduction and conclusion.
4. Reading the abstract.
5. A combination of all the above.

- **Scanning**

This is looking over a text for key terms / data or dates. Skimming through a text quickly to look for the important key information.

- **Guessing unknown words**

Some words can be easily guessed from context, and this means you do not have to keep checking your dictionary. For example, *'a university degree offers a decorous job and entry to a middle-class lifestyle'*. *'Decorous'* is an unknown word. BUT from context you can guess its meaning; *'respectable, refined, formal, higher quality'*.

- **Reading for detail**

This is in-depth reading - understanding exactly what the section / text is saying. Taking your time to read, checking meaning and difficult vocabulary.

- **Annotating text**

Your process of making notes around a text. Some students use highlighters to mark key points, others write notes in the margins.

- **Main idea / subsidiary ideas**

Quite often the main idea is expressed in the topic sentence / first sentence of a paragraph (but not always). Then usually this will be followed by support (subsidiary ideas) and examples. Learning how to identify main points and support is a key skill for summary writing.

- **Credible / limitations / evidence**

This is looking at the evidence (examples, data, research) and judging how reliable it is. Asking questions about whether it is trustworthy. Is there bias? Could there be any limitations? See critical reading strategies: https://www.academic-englishuk.com/critical-thinking

- **Author's stance**

What side is the author arguing? Are they for or against? How do you know? Where are examples in the text that highlight this?

- **Reader's stance**

Are you convinced by what you have read? Do you agree with the writer's ideas and evidence presented? Is there anything in your experience that you question about the text?

- **Summarising**

Can you verbally summarise the key points you have read? Do you understand what the main premise and argument is?