

ACADEMIC READING

Here are five tips to help you improve your reading:

1. **Styles of reading**
2. **Active reading**
3. **A tip for speeding up your active reading**
4. **Spotting authors' navigation aids**
5. **Words and vocabulary**

1. Styles of reading

There are three styles of reading which we use in different situations:

Scanning: for a specific focus

The technique you use when you're looking up a name in the phone book: you move your eye quickly over the page to find particular words or phrases that are relevant to the task you're doing.

It's useful to scan parts of texts to see if they're going to be useful to you:

the introduction or preface of a book

the first or last paragraphs of chapters

the concluding chapter of a book.

Skimming: for getting the gist of something

The technique you use when you're going through a newspaper or magazine: you read quickly to get the main points, and skip over the detail. It's useful to skim:

to preview a passage before you read it in detail

to refresh your understanding of a passage after you've read it in detail.

Use skimming when you're trying to decide if a book in the library or bookshop is right for you.

Detailed reading: for extracting information accurately

Where you read every word, and work to learn from the text.

In this careful reading, you may find it helpful to skim first, to get a general idea, but then go back to read in detail. Use a dictionary to make sure you understand all the words used.

2. Active reading

When you're reading for your course, you need to make sure you're actively involved with the text. It's a waste of your time to just passively read, the way you'd read a thriller on holiday.

Always make notes to keep up your concentration and understanding.

Here are four tips for active reading.

Underlining and highlighting

Pick out what you think are the most important parts of what you are reading. If you are a visual learner, you'll find it helpful to use different colours to highlight different aspects of what you're reading.

Note key words

Record the main headings as you read. Use one or two keywords for each point.

Questions

Before you start reading something like an article, a chapter or a whole book, prepare for your reading by noting down questions you want the material to answer. While you're reading, note down questions which the author raises.

Summaries

Pause after you've read a section of text. Then:

put what you've read into your own words;

skim through the text and check how accurate your summary is and

fill in any gaps.

3. A tip for speeding up your active reading

You should learn a huge amount from your reading. If you read passively, without learning, you're wasting your time. So **train your mind** to learn.

Survey

Gather the information you need to focus on the work and **set goals**:

Read the title to help prepare for the subject

Read the introduction or summary to see what the author thinks are the key points

Notice the boldface headings to see what the structure is

Notice any maps, graphs or charts. They are there for a purpose

Notice the reading aids, italics, bold face, questions at the end of the chapter. They are all there to help you understand and remember.

Question

Help your mind to engage and **concentrate**. Your mind is engaged in learning when it is actively looking for answers to questions.

Try turning the boldface headings into questions you think the section should answer.

Read

Read the first section with your questions in mind. Look for the answers, and make up new questions if necessary.

Recall

After each section, stop and think back to your questions. See if you can answer them from memory. If not, take a look back at the text. Do this as often as you need to.

Review

Once you have finished the whole chapter, go back over all the questions from all the headings. See you if can still answer them. If not, look back and refresh your memory.

4. Spotting authors' navigation aids

Learn to recognise sequence signals, for example:

"Three advantages of..." or *"A number of methods are available..."* leads you to expect several points to follow.

The first sentence of a paragraph will often indicate a sequence: *"One important cause of..."* followed by *"Another important factor..."* and so on, until *"The final cause of..."*

General points are often illustrated by particular **examples**.

Whatever you are reading, be aware of the **author's background**. It is important to recognise the bias given to writing by a writer's political, religious, social background. Learn which newspapers and journals represent a particular standpoint.

5. Words and vocabulary

When you're a graduate, people expect you to use a vocabulary which is wider than a school-leaver's. To **expand** your vocabulary:

Choose a **large dictionary** rather than one which is 'compact' or 'concise'. You want one which is big enough to define words clearly and helpfully (around 1,500 pages is a good size).

Avoid dictionaries which send you round in circles by just giving synonyms.

There are over 600,000 words in the *Oxford English Dictionary*; most of them have different meanings, (only a small proportion are synonyms).

Keep your dictionary at hand when you're studying. Look up unfamiliar words and work to understand what they mean.

Improve your vocabulary by READING WIDELY.

TASK:

What sort of things do you read in your own language?

What do you read in English?

Here are some examples of different written texts: **Novel, Instructions, Textbook, Academic article, Advertisement, Local newspaper, Poem, Personal letter, Novel, Dictionary, Job advertisements, Text (SMS) message:**

Which category do the following texts belong to?

If one note is played on the keyboard and then another note is played anywhere to the right of it, the sound of the second note is said to be higher than that of the first. A note to the left of it would produce a lower sound. In the same way men's voices are said to be lower than those of women or young boys. The technical word referring to the height or depth of sound is pitch.

- IN HARD WATER AREAS REGULAR DESCALING IS ESSENTIAL TO KEEP YOUR KETTLE IN GOOD WORKING ORDER.
- If your kettle switches off before it has boiled it indicates your kettle needs descaling.
- Descale your kettle using
 - either a proprietary kettle descaler suitable for PLASTIC kettles. Follow manufacturer's instructions,
 - or white vinegar
 1. Fill the kettle with $\frac{1}{2}$ l of 8° white vinegar.
 2. Leave to soak for 1 hour without boiling.
 3. Empty your kettle and rinse it two or three times with clear water.
 - or citric acid

It is hoped that this study will add to our knowledge about the characteristics of different types of text, and illuminate the way for students who find themselves lost amidst the echoes of the multiple voices they hear within the same text.

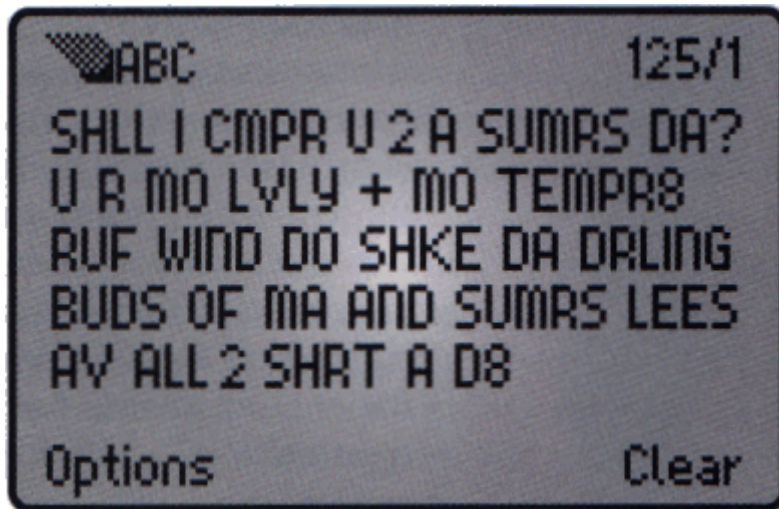
Dear John,

How are you? Everything here's fine. I'm very happy at the moment because my football team won last week. I went to the match with my brother Fernando, and we both enjoyed it very much. The score was 6 - 1.

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven....

SHALL I COMPARE THEE TO A SUMMER'S DAY?
THOU ART MORE LOVELY AND MORE TEMPERATE:
ROUGH WINDS DO SHAKE THE DARLING BUDS OF MAY,
AND SUMMER'S LEASE HATH ALL TOO SHORT A DATE....

NOTE:thou = you, thee =object form of thou, art = are, hath = has



Below are the job openings currently available at Bethany University:

The Head Baseball Coach is responsible for overseeing the activities of the team, planning and directing the training of the student athletes, and assessing students' ability and skill level to determine appropriate team position. The Head Coach assists players in reaching their highest spiritual and athletic potential possible through athletic training, leadership skills, and Christian character development...

QUESTIONS:

- o What is your OPINION of each text? Which of the text types do you like reading? Which of them do you have to read (even if you don't like reading them)? Which do you never read? Why?
- o Why do you usually read this kind of text? What is your usual PURPOSE when you read these texts?

And lastly: How does your purpose influence how you read? What METHOD do you use?