Effective Reading – Quick Guide

1. Think about the sources you are using – do they really match your purpose? Do you know why you are reading them, and what you want to find out from them? Select your reading material carefully.

2. Jot down some preliminary questions in advance. This will aid your concentration and focus when you do read.

3. Survey your text. Before you read the sections you need, look at surrounding information. For a book read the introduction/foreword, and the contents/index. For a journal article read the abstract, and look at the reference list. This again will give you a sense of context and background.

4. Read for different purposes – remember that there's more than one way of reading!

   > **Skim** the text for general meaning so that, in conjunction with your survey, you have a sense of context. Don't take anything other than brief notes at this stage; and keep reading forwards…don't stop and worry about the detail. Mark one or two pages you really didn't 'get' to come back to later on.
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   > **Scan** the text, i.e. only look for particular topics and ignore the rest of the text, and re-visit the pages you marked at the skim stage.
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   > Now **read for detail**, and take brief notes. In this final reading you are trying to capture information from the text, get a full picture of the argument and, subsequently, be able to use your notes for an assignment or for revision.

5. Take clear short notes that you can use later.

6. Make your notes from reading plagiarism-proof by separating your summaries and paraphrases from the language of the original. Any quotations and words from the original **must** be identified as such. In addition, keep accurate bibliographical information for all your sources so you can provide accurate in-text citations and a reference list later on.

7. Carry out your reading in an appropriate environment that aids concentration and retention. Don't read and take notes with loud music, or in a busy social area. Don't put yourself in a situation where you are constantly interrupted.