

## Reading at university

Reading is an essential part of learning at university. All courses in all faculties have components which involve reading. To successfully complete an assessment task, or to research an area of interest, it is important not only that you read, but that you read effectively. There is no point in spending hours reading textbooks, or articles in the library or material on the internet, if the material or your reading style is not appropriate to the task.

We have developed the following model which should help you organise your reading efficiently. The model works through a set of steps which you need to follow in order.

## Reading log

.....**Lecturer to insert reading/s**

Now complete the reading log, using the headings provided.

## Reference

Ascertain the referencing system required in your course and follow the examples provided for you on the University Library website which is given below.

<[http://www.usq.edu.au/library/help/ehelp/ref\\_guides/default.htm](http://www.usq.edu.au/library/help/ehelp/ref_guides/default.htm)>.

*Now give the complete reference for the selected piece of material.*

## Argument or purpose

Read the abstract of the article (if there is one) and the introduction. Examine the headings if there are any. Then close the text or put the reading aside. In 1–3 sentences and **IN YOUR OWN WORDS**, write down the argument, which is the author's purpose or the overall theme of the reading.

*Now read the conclusion. In many readings you will find that the argument or purpose is restated in the conclusion. Check that you are still satisfied with what you have written. Change it if you are not.*

## Academic credibility

In this step we want to check the credibility of the article. It is important to read material that is worthy and academically sound. It is particularly important to check the credibility of material found on the net as some sites have no standards or criteria that need to be met before people can paste material to them. It is important that writers have researched other reputable writers and publications for their paper. It is also important that they have some qualification/expertise in the area in which they write.

To assess whether the reading is well researched and academically credible, look through the reference list. Are there references to articles in refereed journals? Journals with a volume and issue number are usually refereed. Are at least some of the references relatively recent (last ten years)? This is not to suggest that material published more than ten years ago is not credible and valuable. What you are assessing is whether the writer is familiar with current research on the topic. Is the writer an academic or professional researcher with an recognized institution? Are any of the books published by recognized academic publishers such as Sage, Routledge, Allen and Unwin, Macmillan or a university press such as Melbourne University Press?

*Now write 2–3 sentences about the quality of the research.*

## Headings

*List the main headings.*

Read over the list and try to work out what you think might be in each section.

## Overview

Go back and read over what you understand under the Argument or Purpose heading. Most journal articles are divided into sections under headings. If there are sections in the reading do the following activity.

Taking the sections one at a time read only the **first sentence of each paragraph in the section.**

*Now, in your own words, write what you think the section will deal with. You should write only 1–2 sentences per section. When you have finished one section go on to the next one.*

## Reading in depth

Choose **one** section or parts of a section to make up about a page of text. Read through the section.

*Now go back and **in your own words** write down the main idea of each paragraph. You should write only one sentence for each main idea. Look over the sentences you have written and see if they follow on logically from each other.*

If the article does not have sections, read until you think that the material forms a section or take about a page at a time and apply the above process for reading in depth.

Please note that when you are doing the research for an assignment at university you may find that you need to read **all** the sections of an article in depth. For this activity we only require you to read in depth **one** section or about a page of text.

## Review

Now that you have completed reading the article, look back at your original statement of the argument and think carefully if the main ideas support it. Revise your original statement of the article if you think this is necessary.

Ask yourself how you will use the material you have just read. The most common use is as support for one of the main ideas of one of your own paragraphs in the set task. If however the article does not now seem to be appropriate or relevant to the set task, then you should not be tempted to use it at all. Work through this reading log procedure again with another article or reading.

