



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH
Centre for Open Learning

English Language Education

Academic Reading for Postgraduates



1 Reading

2 Sources & Referencing

3 Writing



So...
you can read, right?

Quick Task 1: what do you read?

Write down all the kinds of things you read generally every day.

books graphic novels online & print news media
blogs letters emails social media notices
your diary shopping lists promotional material

Quick Task 2: Your academic reading

Write down all sources you might read for your academic studies.

handouts journal articles textbook
blogs reports data written feedback

Quick Task 3: The CHALLENGES of academic reading

Note down what challenges you think you will face with your academic reading.

- Quantity
- Complex Language
- Selective reading
- Maintaining focus
- Retention of ideas
- Critical reading

The **CHALLENGES** of academic reading: Quantity

- Use the reading lists provided: required vs recommended
- Prioritise: pre-reading vs post-reading
- Adopt appropriate reading strategies: skim vs scan vs focused
- Be systematic with note-taking
- Form a study group

Note-taking Proforma

Amend the questions
to suit your purpose.

“Paper Annotation Tool”

Source: Aliotta, M. 2018 **Mastering Academic Writing in the Sciences**. CRC Press

Note-taking Proforma

Title:

Journal:

Author(s):

Volume:

Year:

Page(s):

What is the paper about?

What is the aim of the study?

Why is it important?

What is the approach/method used to acquire the data?

What is the approach/method used to analyse the data?

What are the key findings?

Are there any limitations?

What are the main conclusions and implications in the wider context?

Any other comments?

The **CHALLENGES** of academic reading: **Complex Language**

- Complex sentences
 - Break them into sections (clauses): punctuation & connectors
 - Identify the subject (pronoun, noun, noun phrase)
 - Identify reference words: what do they refer to?
- Identify & learn the vocabulary you need to know (technical terms)
- Do I need to know this word?
 - Yes: can I guess the meaning from its context? No? Look it up.
 - No: move on.
- Academic Word List

The CHALLENGES of academic reading: AWL

- AWL 570 word families in 10 frequency-based groups called “sublists”.
 - AWL (10%) + GSL* (>2000 headwords/80%) = 90% coverage of words in academic texts.
- * General Service List

analyse	1	analysed, analyser, analysers, analyses, analysing, analysis, analyst, analysts, analytic, analytical, analytically, analyze, analyzed, analyzes, analyzing
regulate	2	deregulated, deregulates, deregulating, deregulation, regulated, regulates, regulating, regulation, regulations, regulator, regulators, regulatory, unregulated
emphasis	3	emphasise, emphasised, emphasising, emphasize, emphasized, emphasizes, emphasizing, emphatic, emphatically
persist	10	persisted, persistence, persistent, persistently, persisting, persists

The **CHALLENGES** of academic reading: **Selective reading**

- Familiarise yourself with the structure and organisation of journal articles, textbooks and other material you need to read.
- Adopt an approach to reading each genre
- Be clear about your purpose for reading: e.g. assignment question
- Adopt appropriate reading strategies: skim vs scan vs focused

The **CHALLENGES** of academic reading: Selective reading

Example: *Journal article*

- IMRaD
- Title; Abstract; **I**ntrouduction; **M**ethods; **R**esults; **D**iscussion (Conclusions); Appendices; References
- Subheadings; paragraphs; topic sentences
- Tables, graphs, diagrams

Approach

- Purpose for reading: *Why am I reading this? What do I want to know?*
- Title, abstract, introductory & concluding paragraphs, topic sentences
- Selective focused reading & note-taking

The **CHALLENGES** of academic reading: Maintaining focus

- Know yourself: when is your focus at its best for reading?
- Take regular breaks
 - *Pomodoro technique*
 - 25mins/5mins
 - Repeat x3
 - 20mins break
- Change focus
 - Take notes regularly
 - Reflect on what you've read
 - Relate that back to your purpose for reading

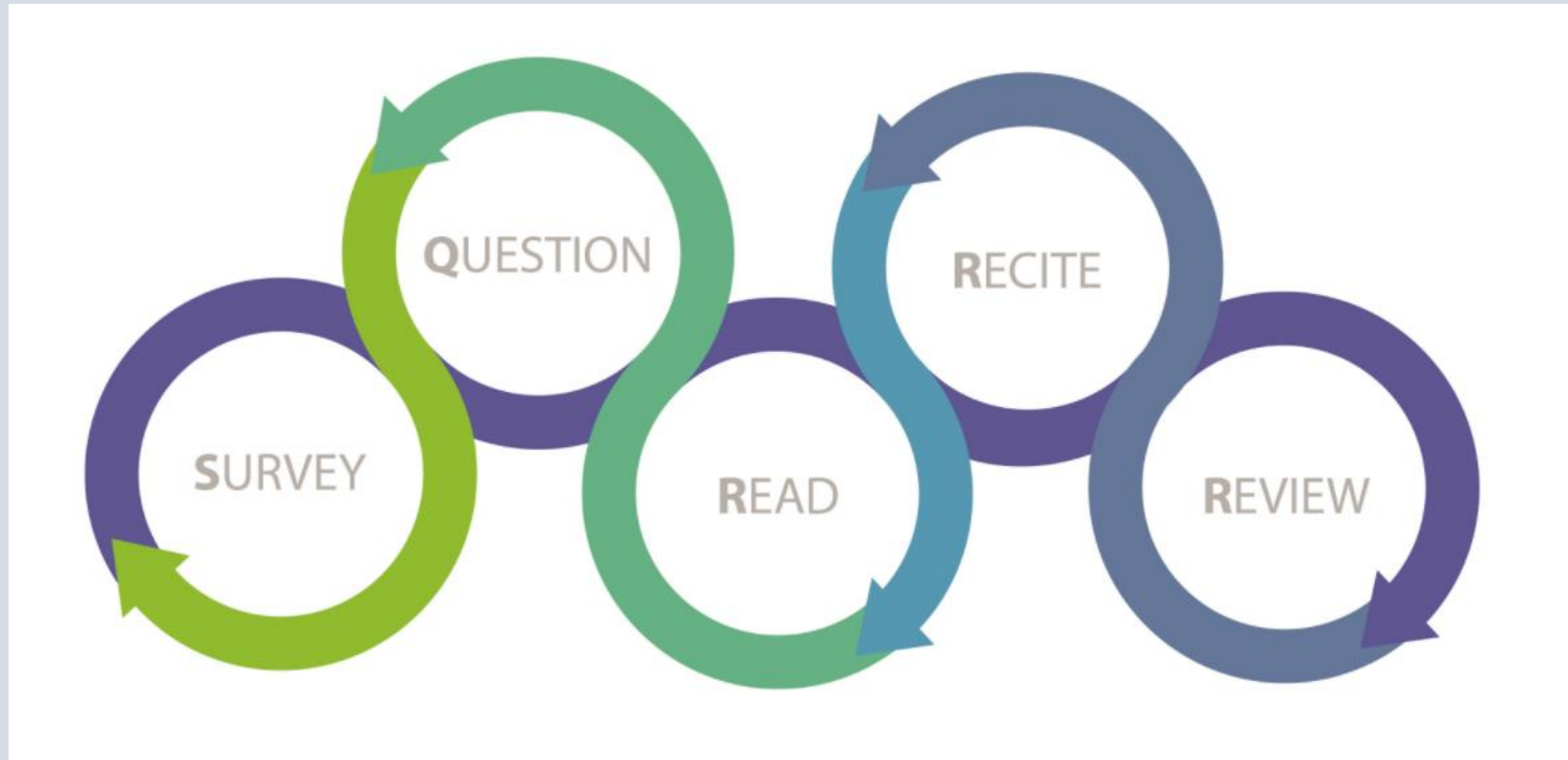
The **CHALLENGES** of academic reading: Retention of ideas

- Review the notes you've taken regularly as you read.
- Relate them to your purpose for reading.
- Make connections between ideas.

The CHALLENGES of academic reading: Critical reading

- Critical writing begins with critical reading.
- Always be aware of your purpose for reading.
- Relate what you are reading back to that purpose.
- Questions you should ask yourself as you read:
 - **Description:** *What? Where? Who? When? How?*
 - **Analysis:** *Why? What if...? Evidence? Assumptions?*
 - **Evaluation:** *So what? What next?*
- Take notes: distinguish main ideas from supporting detail.
- Make connections.
- Reflect.

SQ3R: a technique to address those challenges



Source: <https://usm.maine.edu/agile/sq3r-method>

From Reading into Writing

Reading will be strongly connected to your writing. Most of what you write will be linked to what you read. Remember your purpose for reading? You will need to:

- Take notes on what you read.
- Use your own words.
- Compare what you read.
- Comment on and evaluate what you read.
- Differentiate your views and commentary from those of the texts you read (*How do you do that?*).

References and further ... reading ...

- <https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/student-learning/studyhub/academic-reading/challenges-in-academic-reading>
- <http://www.uefap.com/reading/>
- https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/uploads/production/document/path/1/1710/Critical_Thinking.pdf
- <https://www.eapfoundation.com/vocab/academic/awllists/>
- <https://www.eapfoundation.com/vocab/general/gsl/>
- <https://www.eapfoundation.com/vocab/general/gsl/frequency/>
- <https://usm.maine.edu/agile/sq3r-method>

- Aliotta, M. 2018 **Mastering Academic Writing in the Sciences**. CRC Press

Pause for Thought

Why are sources important?



So, why are sources important?

Because you are...



Standing
on the
shoulders
of giants

Why are sources important?

- In UK Higher Education, lecturers are interested in YOUR argument (sometimes called 'writer's voice').
- You must use the literature (sources) to support the points you raise.

How do I know what sources to read?

- What makes a good source?
- Where are you going to look for sources?

Evaluating electronic sources

Criteria for evaluating internet sites and other electronic resources include:

- Who is the author?
- How current is the information?
- What sort of content is there? *Be aware that commercial interests and some politically-motivated sites may not present a balanced view.*
- Check which audience the information is aimed at.

Is it OK to use
Wikipedia
as a source?

WIKIPEDIA

The Free Encyclopedia

English

6 161 000+ articles

日本語

1 229 000+ 記事

Español

1 627 000+ artículos

Deutsch

2 481 000+ Artikel

Русский

1 661 000+ статей

Français

2 250 000+ articles

Italiano

1 636 000+ voci

中文

1 147 000+ 條目



Português

1 043 000+ artigos

Polski

1 427 000+ haseł

EN ▾ 

 **Read Wikipedia in your language** ▾

Where to find sources

Start with DiscoverEd & Google Scholar

https://discovered.ed.ac.uk/primo-explore/search?vid=44U0E_VU2

Use your databases e.g. IEEE, Scopus, Web of Science



Pause for Thought

Think back to that first question I asked at the start of this lecture:

So, you can read, right?

What changes – if any – do you need to make to your approach to academic reading?

