



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH  
Centre for Open Learning

English Language Education

# Academic Reading for Informatics



**1** Reading

**2** Sources & Referencing

**3** Writing

So...  
you think 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

<b>analyse</b>	1	analysed, analyser, analysers, analyses, analysing, analysis, analyst, analysts, analytic, analytical, analytically, analyze, analyzed, analyzes, analyzing
<b>regulate</b>	2	deregulated, deregulates, deregulating, deregulation, regulated, regulates, regulating, regulation, regulations, regulator, regulators, regulatory, unregulated
<b>emphasis</b>	3	emphasise, emphasised, emphasising, emphasize, emphasized, emphasizes, emphasizing, emphatic, emphatically
<b>persist</b>	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**ntroduction; **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



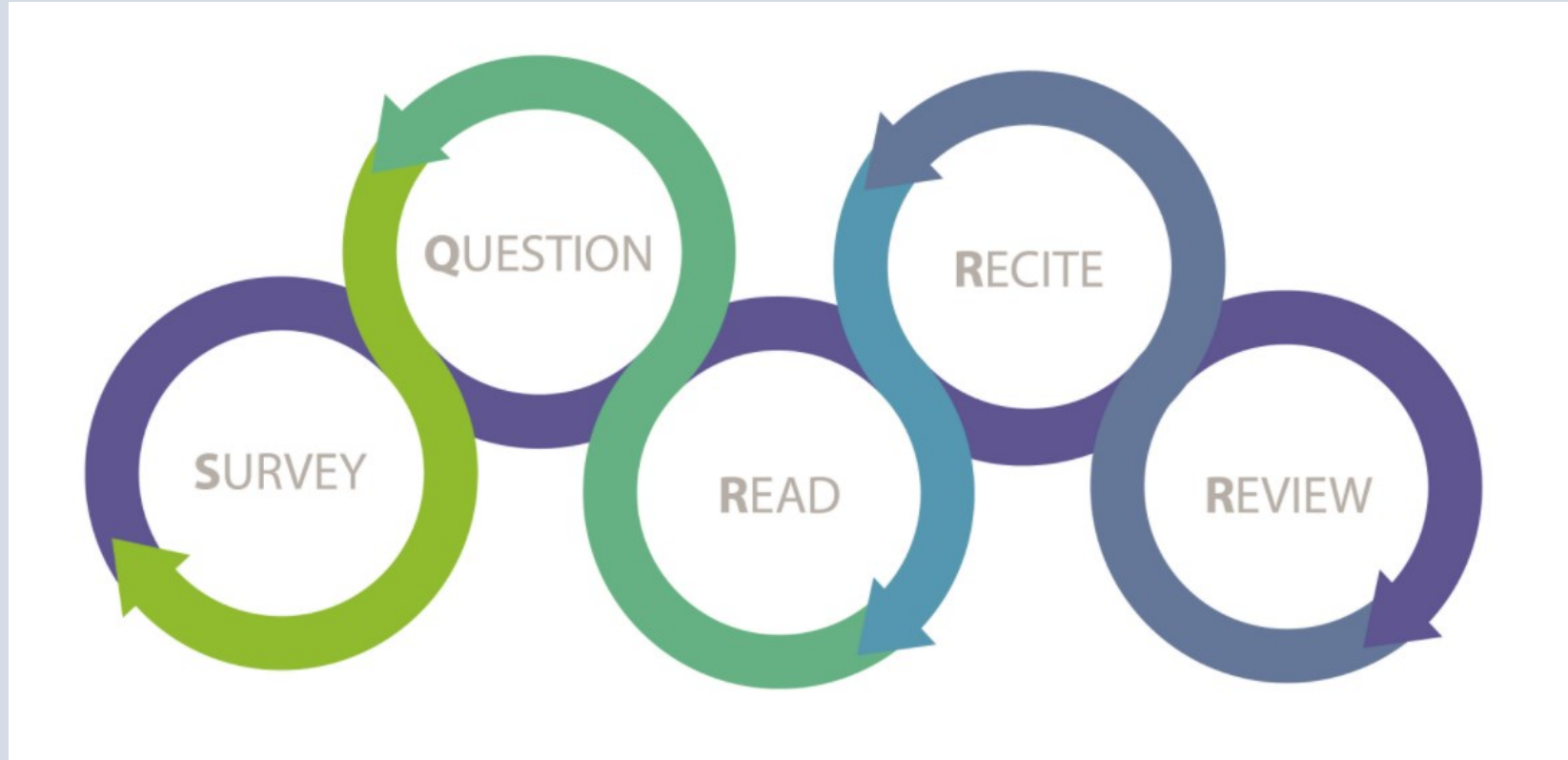
# The **CHALLENGES** of academic reading: Retention of ideas

- 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 or dictate notes on what you read.
- Use your own words.
- Compare what you read.
- Ask yourself questions, comment on and evaluate what you read.
- Differentiate your views and commentary from those of the texts you read (*How do you do that?*).

## 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?



## 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.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

Academic Language & Literacy  
Helpful sources on reading for  
academic studies available to you.



## English Language Education (ELE)

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/english-language-teaching>

## Academic Language and Literacies for In-sessional Study (ALLIS)

- ELE offers online and in-person writing and speaking courses to postgraduate students.
- The courses are free of charge and non-credit bearing.
- Courses are 4 weeks (2 each in Semesters 1 and 2)
- Places are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.
- All our teachers are very experienced in teaching English for academic purposes and working with international students from different disciplines.
- Popular, so book early!!

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/english-language-teaching/in-session-courses/elsis>



## Graduate Writing Centre

ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION

English Language Education home

In-sessional English language courses

Academic Language and Literacies for In-Sessional Study (ALLIS) (Formerly ELSIS)

Graduate Writing Centre

Home > English Language Education > In-sessional English language courses > Graduate Writing Centre

### Graduate Writing Centre

Information about online one-to-one academic writing tutorials (PGT and PGR).

In addition to our other courses, English Language Education (ELE) offers one-to-one academic writing development sessions for postgraduate (PGT and PGR) and members of staff. Undergraduate students seeking academic writing development can also book a session.

Our online one-to-one sessions are approximately 45 minutes long and are designed to help you improve your writing with an English for Academic Purposes expert.

#### What can I discuss?

You should prepare to upload a piece of your writing (around 350 words) that you would like to discuss (e.g. a paragraph or a section of a paper) for discussion.

We can offer advice on all aspects of writing from the macro-level to the micro-level:

- meet expectations in your discipline, considering the genre you are being asked to write
- organise, link and develop your ideas

- Need help with your writing at any time of the semester?
- You can receive one-to-one consultations in an online academic writing tutorial (45 minutes) for postgraduate (PGT & PGR) international students
- Available to October to June
- NOT a proofreading service!!
- Booking is via MyEd.





## ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

Home > Institute for Academic Development > Study Hub > Study Hub learning resources

### Study Hub learning resources

resources. Advice on specific study skills topics, plus downloadable re

Institute for Academic  
Development (IAD)

<https://institute-academic-development.ed.ac.uk/study-hub>





## SQ3R for reading & making notes



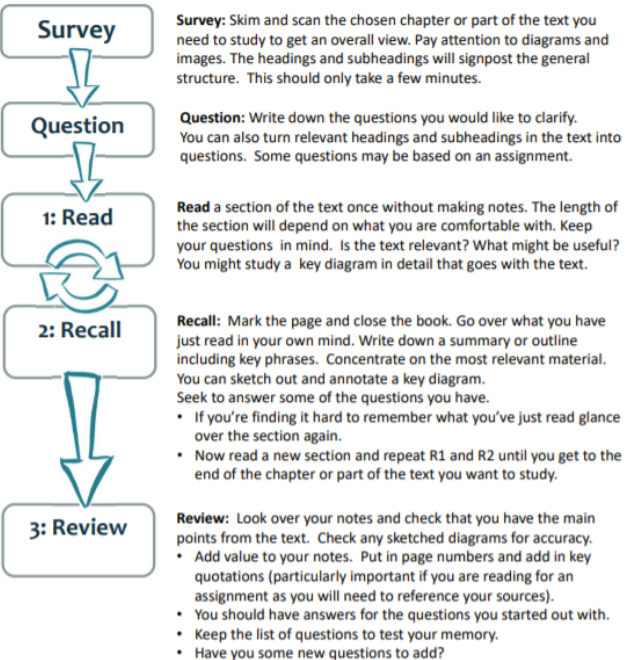
This is a system originally devised by Francis Robinson of Ohio State University in the 1940s (Pauk & Fiore, 2000, p65). A range of versions of it can be found in study guides, both in print and online. This is one interpretation of the five-step method.

- Adapt the method to suit you, your purpose and your subject area.



### Top tip

Before starting become familiar with the organisation of the text book. Your course outline will help you identify which parts you need.



Ref: Pauk, W. & Fiore, J.P. (2000) *Succeed in College!* Houghton Mifflin, Boston & NY.

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Institute for Academic Development

## SQ3R for reading & making notes

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/study-hub/learning-resources>

## Using a book



Before setting out, be clear what your purpose is. What are the questions you want to answer? What do you need to clarify? Make a short list and keep it with you.

1

### Before reading

Is it out-of-date?  
Is it on the reading list?  
Does it have the information you want?  
Quickly check - you might only need a small part of the book.

Ditch the book?



### Take down the details

- Author, title, year of publication, publisher and so on.
- Write down the library **classmark** so you can find it again.

### Check out the contents page

Which chapters or sections are likely to have what you want?  
Mark the pages temporarily (sticky notes are less likely to fall out).



2

## Concentrate on beginnings and endings

### Read the introduction or preface

This can be a good way of establishing the author's main ideas.  
Usually authors give signposts to the most important parts of their writing.  
Make a note of any key quotations (with the page number).

### Skip to the end and read the conclusion

This should help you confirm what the author's main ideas are.  
Again make a note of any key quotations.



### Summarise the key ideas in your own words.

Ditch the book?



### Go back to the contents page

Decide whether you need to read any more of the book.

3

## If you decide to read more

### Check the index for other relevant material

You might go back to these bits later if you have time, so make a note of the pages.

Skim through the sections you marked.  
Look for section headings.  
Read first and last paragraphs.  
Look out for any diagrams or illustrations.



### Keep your key questions in mind.



Institute for Academic Development

## Tackling a textbook

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/study-hub/learning-resources>

## Reading a research paper



**1 Find the context**

**Recommended course books:** These are textbooks which aim to summarise a large body of work.

**Review papers:** Academic papers giving an overview of research with evaluation and comment.

**Selected original research papers.**

**Read the abstract and skim the article:**  
Does it meet your purpose?  
What questions do you want to answer?

**Take down the details**

- Author, article title, year of publication and journal title in the reference format you need to use.
- Note the volume, issue and page numbers so you can find it again.

**2 Concentrate on beginnings and endings**

**Read the introduction**  
This can be a good way of establishing the research questions and any hypothesis.

- Usually authors give signposts to the most important parts of their writing.
- Take a note of any key issues and concepts.
- Take a quick look at any diagrams and tables of results.

**Skip to the end and read the conclusion**

- This should help you confirm what the author's main ideas are.
- Make a note of the key findings and any key quotations.

**Pause to think.**  
You should have a good idea of what the research is about and the conclusions.

- Are the main ideas clear – do you need to skim and scan and clarify some things?
- Make some summary notes in your own words.

**Do you need to read any more of this paper? Ditch the paper?**

**Be critical**  
Theoretical basis?  
Influences?  
Bias?  
Sound methods?  
Alternatives? Reliability?  
Statistical significance?  
Conflicts of interest?

**If you decide to read more**  
Identify sections requiring close reading.  
Scan for specific information such as supporting evidence.  
Always have a list of questions in mind – be critical.

**Check the reference list**  
What sources has the author used?  
Is anything missing?  
Are there other books or articles that might help you?

Key papers need to be read closely and should be prioritised.

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## Tackling a journal article

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/study-hub/learning-resources>

## Reading notes record sheet



Notes from reading are most effective when they clearly highlight the main points and start to make connections to other material. Making effective notes helps you to think actively about your reading and critically analyse the material, rather than passively just reading.

The reading notes sheet (on the next page) can be used as a guide to help you think more analytically about the material.

- There are some **basic questions (grey boxes)** to help you put the reading into context (e.g. 'How is this related to my course/topic/lecture/assignment?').
- Some **more probing questions (white boxes)** to get you to think more deeply about the reading (e.g. 'Who does the author work for?').
- The **questions in bold (e.g. 'Why am I unsure?')** are asking for your opinion i.e. your critical analysis of the reading.

Reminding yourself of the questions, by looking at the reading notes sheet before reading, will help prime your brain to look for key information whilst you're reading.

An even more effective reading method would be to look at the reading notes sheet first, do the reading, put the reading away, and then complete the sheet by recall.

You can use the sheets either as an e-copy or print them out and hand write them. Having all your notes organised in the same way will help you see main points and connections more clearly.

The questions on the reading notes sheet are a starting point, think about what sort of other questions you could ask that are more specific to your topic or assignment.

Reading notes record sheet		
Title:	Author(s):	Full reference in the format of your subject/assignment*
Date read/accessed:	Published date (online or in-print):	Subject:
How is this related to my course/topic/lecture/assignment?	<b>Main point(s):</b>	<b>Additional areas covered:</b>
<b>My opinion: agree/disagree/unsure?</b>	<b>Why do I agree/disagree?</b>  <b>Why I am unsure?</b>	Do any other author(s)/pieces of work have the same opinion as me?
Who does the author work for? Who funded this work? Who are their affiliations? Do they have an agenda/ are they biased? Is this a trusted source?	Are there any holes within this article/work/method?  How does this affect the results/argument/conclusions?	<b>What is the one point I remember from reading this?</b>  <b>What other questions has this reading stimulated?</b>

\* Check your course/programme handbooks for referencing format



## Reading notes record sheet

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/study-hub/learning-resources>

External

## Manchester Academic Phrasebank

<https://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>



## Academic Phrasebank

Introducing Work

Referring to Sources

Describing Methods

Reporting Results

Discussing

### Home Page

#### GENERAL LANGUAGE FUNCTIONS

Being Cautious

Being Critical

Classifying and Listing

Compare and Contrast

Defining Terms

Describing Trends

Describing Quantities

Explaining Causality

Giving Examples

Handling Transition

Writing about the Past

The Academic Phrasebank is a general resource for academic writers. It aims to provide you with examples of some of the phraseological 'nuts and bolts' of writing organised according to the main sections of a research paper or dissertation (see the top menu ). Other phrases are listed under the more general communicative functions of academic writing (see the menu on the left). The resource should be particularly useful for writers who need to report their research work. The phrases, and the headings under which they are listed, can be used simply to assist you in thinking about the content and organisation of your own writing, or the phrases can be incorporated into your writing where this is appropriate. In most cases, a certain amount of creativity and adaptation will be necessary when a phrase is used. The items in the Academic Phrasebank are mostly content neutral and generic in nature; in using them, therefore, you are not stealing other people's ideas and this does not constitute plagiarism. For some of the entries, specific content words have been included for illustrative purposes, and these should be substituted when the phrases are used. The resource was designed primarily for academic and scientific writers who are non-native speakers of English. However, native speaker writers may still find much of the material helpful. In fact, recent data suggest that the majority of users are native speakers of English. More about **Academic Phrasebank**.

This site was created by **John Morley**. If you could spare just two or three minutes of your time, I would be extremely grateful for any feedback on Academic Phrasebank: Please click **here** to access a very short questionnaire. Thank you.

expanded

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Using English for Academic Purposes  
For Students in Higher Education

(Since 29th April, 1999 - 21 years!)

Andy Gillett  
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Last updated: 18<sup>th</sup> February, 2020

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