### Academic and Career Skills Top Tips

#### Improving reading efficiency

**Become an active reader**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Have a purpose for reading</th>
<th>Use a variety of reading approaches to suit your purpose. (Not everything has to be read carefully and fully.)</th>
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<td>- Ask yourself why you are reading the material (e.g. to get an overall impression, to identify main ideas, to find a specific piece of information)</td>
<td>- To decide if all or part of the material is worth reading in detail, <strong>preview</strong> the material (e.g. look at the title, contents, preface, abstract, index, headings).</td>
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| - Use questions to guide your reading; for instance,  
  - Use learning outcomes from the course outline to form questions about the topic, and read to answer these questions.  
  - Read to answer the questions at the end of your textbook chapters.  
  - If you are reading for an assignment, keep the assignment question in mind and use your research plan to guide your reading. | - To get an “outline” of the content before reading carefully, **overview** the material (e.g. read headings, introductory paragraphs, paragraph beginnings, conclusion), or **skim** sections. |
| - Review your purpose at the end of the reading task. | - To locate specific information, **scan** the material. |
| - Ask yourself questions, such as  
  - What did you understand and not understand?  
  - Did you find an answer to your question?  
  - What will you do with the information? | - To understand fully (“close reading”), **read for “points” and “evidence”** rather than simply for “detail”.  
  - (Look for the key idea in each paragraph – usually at or near the beginning of the paragraph – and check out the evidence that supports this idea. Look for “answers” to the questions you have previously set for yourself.) |

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**Read selectively**

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<th>Follow a search strategy</th>
<th>Be disciplined</th>
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<td>- Decide what to read, and in which order (e.g. lecture notes and general texts before more specific sources).</td>
<td>- Ask your lecturer (tutor) if you are not sure which source(s) to start with.</td>
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<td>- Ask your lecturer (tutor) if you are not sure which source(s) to start with.</td>
<td>- You cannot read everything, so ask yourself whether the source is relevant, recent, specific (or general) enough, etc.</td>
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Read critically

Question what you read

- For instance, what is the author’s purpose? what theoretical framework is the author using? what are the key ideas? what evidence is used?
- For instance, what alternative arguments or interpretations are there?

Know when to stop

It’s time to stop when ...

- ... you are reading the same points again
- ... you have used up all your research time
- ... you are using reading to avoid writing!

Can you improve your reading rate?

“Speed reading” techniques are of limited value for most of the types of reading you will do at university, but if you want to increase your reading speed try the following:

- Eliminate “slowing habits”, such as, subvocalising or mouthing, word by word finger pointing, back skipping
- Increase the “chunk” of words focused on
- Practise efficient eye movements
- Practise reading at speed. Use a pencil held 1cm above the page, focus on groups of words, move the pencil at a constant speed along each line, and gradually increase the speed of the pencil.

Other useful resources

There are many useful guides in the Lincoln University library and on the internet. Try ...

- University of Southampton’s site on Reading skills. [http://www.studyskills.soton.ac.uk/studytips/reading_skills.htm](http://www.studyskills.soton.ac.uk/studytips/reading_skills.htm)

Or make an individual appointment with one of the Learning Advisors.

Visit our website at: [http://ltl.lincoln.ac.nz/](http://ltl.lincoln.ac.nz/) or ask at the Service Point about

- workshops,
- drop-in sessions
- individual appointments we offer.