

# Reading Strategies

Authored by Khadijah Salman Ghani  
Designed by Haroon Masroor

*Office of Academic Advising and Student Success*

Last Updated: 15/10/24

## I know how to read. Why should I go through this handout?

Not only is the nature and purpose of your readings at LUMS different from what you are used to at school, but **reading is critical for academic success at LUMS**. In fact, you are most likely going to have multiple reading assignments at a time which means that you will have to employ effective reading strategies to remain on track. This handout will help you develop those skills.

## CONTENTS

|                                                                      |          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>How Reading in University is Different From Reading in School</b> | <b>3</b> |
| <b>Things To Consider Before You Start Reading</b>                   | <b>3</b> |
| Create an environment that is conducive to learning                  | 3        |
| Set aside sufficient time to complete the reading                    | 3        |
| Set Goals for Your Reading                                           | 3        |
| <b>General Tips for Reading</b>                                      | <b>4</b> |
| How to Read an Academic Paper                                        | 4        |
| How to Skim Through a Reading                                        | 5        |
| How to Critique a Reading                                            | 5        |
| <b>Effective Reading Strategies</b>                                  | <b>5</b> |
| How to Increase and Vary Your Reading Rate                           | 5        |
| SQW3R Method Of Reading For Close Reading Of The Text                | 5        |

# Reading Strategies

## Before You Start Reading

### Create an environment that is conducive to learning

- Minimize external distractions
- Mute notifications
- Remove your smartphone
- Ensure that your study space is well-lit



### Set aside sufficient time to complete the reading

- Read at the time you are most productive
- Set time goals for your reading.
- Schedule breaks in between for lengthy or difficult readings



### Set Goals for Your Reading

- **The depth of your reading is determined by its purpose.** Is it for an assignment, presentation, or to score CP points?
- **Condense the reading** into 3-4 summary points.
- **For each key idea** identify the supporting details.
- **Make flow charts, mind maps, graphs, or diagrams to visually illustrate the main points.**



## Effective Reading Strategies

| S<br>Q<br>W<br>3<br>R | Survey                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Question                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Write                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                       | <p>Survey the text to know the overall content in it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the headings &amp; subheadings referring to?</li> <li>• Introductory paragraph(s) convey the text's purpose.</li> <li>• Ending paragraph(s) contains a summary of the text.</li> <li>• Tally the learning outcomes of the course with the reading.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make a question out of each heading/ sub-heading/ figure/ chart in the reading.</li> <li>• Answer those questions at the end of each section.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                  | <p>Make notes along the reading process. Annotate the text by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlighting AND writing why that part is important</li> <li>• Defining difficult words.</li> <li>• Writing down insights about the reading for later reference.</li> </ul> |
|                       | Read                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Recite                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Review                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the main point in each paragraph                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Focus on topic &amp; concluding sentences.</li> <li>○ Look into transition words &amp; what they imply about associated information.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• How is the main point substantiated?                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What supporting information is provided?</li> <li>○ Additional exercise: how convincing is the author? How reliable is the data?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read your questions/ concerns about the reading out loud.</li> <li>• Rephrase the points that have been presented.</li> <li>• Think of examples illustrating the point(s) being discussed.</li> <li>• Conduct further research on unclear aspects of the text.</li> </ul> | <p>Create an outline of the reading &amp; frequently go over the notes.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

Designed by: Iman Saeed

- **Reading for courses is an integral part of academic life at LUMS.**
- Given the heavy workload, it can become difficult to retain information in all the readings.
- Other times, readings can seem particularly dense and difficult to understand.
- In such cases, reading strategies can help maximise learning outcomes for students.

## How Reading in University is Different From Reading in School

- While the nature of readings you will encounter in university varies depending on the courses you take, **you will invariably have to read more efficiently in university.**
- In addition to textbooks, **you will also be exposed to other forms of reading** in university including (but not limited to):
  - Academic papers
  - Academic books
  - Articles
  - Reports
- **You will be tested on these readings in different ways.**
  - Some instructors may **quiz you on the content** directly.
  - Others may **build on the concepts in the readings with the understanding that you have already read and understood the material.** In this case, you will benefit from the class session if you already have a grasp of the concepts in the reading.
  - You may also be required to **present readings in front of the class without prior class discussion.**
- **You will have to do the reading to score class participation points.** Most instructors evaluate your contribution in class based on quality rather than quantity which means that you must have done the assigned readings for that class.
- You might have to read further on a topic for essay writing or based on personal interest.

## Things To Consider Before You Start Reading

### Create an environment that is conducive to learning

- **Minimise external distractions** so that you can focus on your reading material.
- **Mute notifications** on your smartphone so you do not get sidetracked by them.
- **Remove your smartphone** from sight so you do not have the constant urge to check it.
- **Ensure that your study space is well-lit** so you can work more productively.

### Set aside sufficient time to complete the reading

- **Read at that time** when you are generally more productive.
- **Set goals** for the time you allot to your reading.
- **If the reading is difficult or lengthy**, schedule breaks in between to facilitate learning.

### Set Goals for Your Reading

- **Think about why you are doing the reading.** Is it for an assignment, presentation, or to score CP points? This will determine the detail with which you need to do the reading.
- **In most cases, instructors provide agenda points** for the week when they assign readings. It is a healthy habit to go over those to understand the purpose of the assigned text.

- **Condense the reading** into 3-4 summary points.
  - This will help you remember the crux of the reading and can be good for scoring CP points in class.
- **For each summary point (key idea)**, identify the supporting details.
  - You can use these details as a basis for critique or to help you ace your assignment. It will also help you score high-quality CP.
- **Make flow charts, mind maps, graphs, or diagrams** to visually illustrate the main points. This will help you remember the points better.
- **Discuss the reading** with peers to understand multiple perspectives or interpretations of the text.

## MYTHS ABOUT READINGS

- **You have to read every word** in the text or you will miss out on important information.
  - Instead, read keywords in a sentence.
- **Skipping lines or paragraphs will reduce your understanding** of the reading.
  - Every line does not contain a new point. The purpose of reading is to understand the key details in the paper rather than to know everything in it.
- **Reading once is enough** to understand the entire reading.
  - Skim the first time for main points and read a second time to understand more deeply.

## General Tips for Reading

### How to Read an Academic Paper

- **When trying to find articles**, read the title and abstract of the paper to check whether it is relevant to your topic.
  - The abstract contains the topic, thesis, and main findings of the paper.
  - If the paper is relevant, browse the bibliography for further related readings.
- Keep the following questions in mind while reading:

| QUESTION                                              | WHERE TO FIND THE ANSWER                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| What is the main argument/ thesis?                    | You will find this in the introduction and/or discussion |
| How does the paper contribute to existing literature? | You will find this in the literature review              |
| Optional: what research method(s) have been used?     | You will find this in the methodology section            |
| What were the results or findings?                    | You will find this in the results section                |
| What conclusions are drawn in the paper?              | You will find this in the discussion section             |
| What are the limitations of the paper?                | Usually at the end of the paper                          |

- **If you have to skim the paper**, read the introduction and discussion sections to understand the thesis and findings/ conclusions.
- **If the paper has complicated statistics**, skip those and read their interpretation in the paragraph instead (unless the instructor has specified the importance of understanding these).
- **Focus on any tables/ graphs/ charts** in the paper as they effectively summarise the results.
- **Note down the main points** of the article to avoid reading it again (use highlighters, margin notes, etc.)

## How to Skim Through a Reading

- **Read the headings/ subheadings** to identify the main point(s) that will be discussed in the section.
- **Read the first and last sentence of each paragraph** to understand the gist of the paragraph.
- **Focus on words that have been emphasised** (i.e. italicised/ bolded) and understand their significance in the text.
- **Pay attention to lists or tables** in the text since they provide useful summaries/ key points of the text.
- **Identify if any concepts are being repeated** or explained through multiple examples because those are the important concepts.

## How to Critique a Reading

- Think of whether the author has been able to convince you. How has the author done that? List down the strengths or weaknesses of the argument.
- Think of ways in which the author could have made the argument more convincing.
  - Is there anything you did not understand in the text that the author ought to have explained?
- Identify any biases within the reading.
  - Is there anything about the author's background that might make their presentation of information biased?
  - What is the tone of the text?
  - Has the other author shown multiple perspectives/ approaches to the topic?
- Has the instructor assigned multiple readings for a session? If yes, think of what unique point *each* reading is conveying.
- Think of ways in which the readings are different or similar to each other.
- If both the readings convey the same argument, which one was more convincing? Think of reasons for that.
- It is also useful to compare the readings for a class with those of previous classes.

## Effective Reading Strategies

### How to Increase and Vary Your Reading Rate

- Take a fairly simple reading.
- Divide the page into three parts by drawing two vertical lines down the page.
- Each line will be divided into 3 groups of words.
- With a pencil/pen, focus on only the important/keywords in each group of words.
- Read fast where there are only a few keywords.
- Slow down your reading speed where you feel like there is more information.
- Practice this technique often until you do not need to draw lines down the page anymore.
- This technique will train you to read important information faster.

### SQW3R Method Of Reading For Close Reading Of The Text

#### SURVEY

- Before reading the text, survey it to know the overall content in the reading.
  - What are the headings and subheadings referring to?
  - Read the introductory paragraph(s) to understand the purpose of the text.
  - Read the ending paragraph(s) to understand the summary of the text.
  - Tally the learning outcomes of the course with the reading.

## QUESTION

- Make a question out of each heading/ sub-heading/ figure/ chart in the reading.
- Answer those questions at the end of each section.

## READ

- Identify the main point presented in each paragraph
  - Focus on topic sentences and concluding sentences.
  - Look into transition words and what they imply about the information that follows.  
*([Here](#) is a list of transition words that you can access)*
- Understand how the main point is being substantiated.
  - What supporting information is provided? (figures/ authority quotes/ surveys)
  - Additional exercise: how convincing is the author? How reliable is the data?

## WRITE

- Make notes along the reading process. Annotate the text by:
  - Instead of highlighting, writing why that part is important next to it.
  - Defining difficult words.
  - Writing down insights about the reading for later reference.
  - Answering the questions made out of the headings/ subheadings.

## RECITE

- Read your questions/ concerns about the reading out loud.
- Rephrase the points that have been presented. This helps retain information.
- Think of examples illustrating the point(s) being discussed.
- Conduct further research on unclear aspects of the text.

## REVIEW

- Create an outline of the reading and frequently go over the notes.

## **Further Reading**

[More on the SQW3R Method](#)

[Reading Goals and More](#)

[Healthy Reading Habits](#)

[Reading Textbooks](#)

[The Writing Process - Habib University](#)

## **References**

[Interrogating Texts: Six Reading Habits to Develop in Your First Year at Harvard](#)

[Studying Strategies](#)

[Reading](#)

[Transition Words](#)

[10 Strategies to Improve Your Reading Comprehension for College](#)

[How to Seriously Read a Scientific Paper](#)

[Reading Techniques](#)

[Six Reading Myths](#)

[Reading Skills for University Study](#)