

# Read efficiently

## Try reading in 'layers'

This can be more effective than just reading all the way through because you can

- See if the text is going to be useful for your purpose
- Get an outline before you read in depth so that it's easier to understand
- Focus your attention on the parts of the text you need

### 1. Read for relevance

- Is this going to be useful at all?
- Which particular parts? How?

Look at things that will give you a general idea of the scope and purpose, such as title, abstract, introduction, headings, conclusions, summaries

This will include

- **skimming** – reading quickly through to get a general idea
- **scanning** – looking for specific words or pieces of information

### 2. Read for an overview

- Use headings and opening paragraphs and the first sentence of each paragraph to build a rough outline of the content and follow the author's main structure/argument (Sometimes you already have a clear picture from the abstract or the introduction.)
- Skim the text
  - to decide whether you need to read the entire article in detail or
  - to identify the most pertinent parts for your work
- Look out for 'signal' words and phrases that show how parts of the text relate to each other
- Look out for words and phrases that can indicate the author's stance
- Don't stop whenever you come to something you don't understand: it may be explained or become clear as you continue reading; if it seems important, make a note so that you can check it out later.

for several reasons.. in contrast.. before considering.. it follows that..

Clearly, .. As X has pointed out.. It is debatable whether..

### 3. Read critically and for detail

- Focus on what is useful for your research
- Probe the text itself
- Relate it to other texts you have read
  - How does it affect what you want to say?
  - How might you use this material in your work?