

## Campusweite Schreibwerkstatt

### Reading Strategies

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Unlike you may expect, reading can be a complex and time-consuming step in your writing process. Without the appropriate methodological knowledge, organizing and discussing your information can become a challenging task. Frequently, you will also find yourself dealing with issues of involuntary plagiarism: Your collections of quotations and excerpts may confuse you and leave you wondering whether you are using your original ideas or the ideas of somebody else.

There are many reading strategies which help you cope with these issues. Choose the ones that you deem fit for your needs and for your reading objectives.

#### Preparation / Selecting the Relevant Material

You have completed your preliminary research, and the topic of your thesis and your thesis statement have already become clearer. After a more focused in-depth research, you seem to have an extensive collection of sources which could be useful for your project.

This is how you deal with it:

1. Have a quick look at every text to find out if it really fits your topic and your research question.
  - a) Look at the title, table of contents, abstract, introduction, conclusion, highlighted passages, register, and works cited.
  - b) If the text still seems fit, use its structure to work your way through it. Decide whether you want to read it as a whole or whether you would like to focus on single paragraphs. Skim through every page by focusing on few words or by reading only the first two sentences of every paragraph.
  
2. If necessary, choose one of the following methods for a detailed and systematic text analysis.

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### Reading as Translation

[cf. Werder, Lutz von: Wissenschaftliche Texte kreativ lesen. Berlin; Milow: Schibri 1994, P. 32f; Werder, Lutz von: Grundkurs des wissenschaftlichen Lesens. Berlin; Milow: Schibri 1995, P. 29]

Objective:

- The acquisition of technical terms as not knowing them makes it difficult to understand academic literature

How you do it:

1. Read the text and write all the technical terms which you do not know in the first column.
2. Extract their signification by considering context information. Note them in the second column.
3. Check for a definition in an encyclopedia (or ask somebody in class). Note a short definition in the third column.

Technical Term	Your Translation	Short Definition from Encyclopedia

### Highlighting and Annotating

Objectives:

- Separate important from unimportant information
- Better focus on important contents when reading for the second time
- Understand the structure of the text by signaling the function of a paragraph

How you do it:

1. Skim through the text to have a rough impression of its contents and structure. In doing so, read main headlines and sub-headlines, abstract and introduction, the first sentence of every paragraph and highlighted passages. This overview of the connections within the text structure allows you to evaluate the importance of single statements more precisely and keeps you from highlighting the whole text.
2. Then read the entire text and only mark central terms (your own way of doing it: with colors/underlining/framing). Be careful not to highlight more than one or two key terms per paragraph.

*Variation:* Blacken/censor all the information which you deem unimportant until you have only the essential content left. If necessary, make annotations which reflect your reactions to the text. In doing so, you will be able to trace back your first impression when skimming through the text for a second time (e.g. !, ?, +, -, ->).

3. Make notes in the margins of every paragraph to capture the text structure content-wise and logic-wise:
  - I. One key word for text content.
  - II. A brief summary of the central statement.
  - III. The purpose of this paragraph (e.g. definition, example, question, thesis, argument, evidence, conclusion, summary). Signal words can help you decide on the purpose and may come as verbs (to justify, to prove,...) or as conjunctions (thus, therefore, finally,...).

## Excerpt

### Objectives:

- Separate important from unimportant information
- Store central contents for better and faster access
- Establish references to other texts

### How you do it:

1. Skim through the text to gain a first impression of its structure and contents. In doing so, read the main headlines and chapter headlines, the abstract and introduction, the first sentence of a paragraph, and highlighted passages.
2. Do some highlighting work and make annotations.
3. Note down central information in a chart in form of quotations or paraphrases.
4. Note down exact source references.
5. Also, note down comments and questions and signal why they seem to you important with regard to your research question.

### 2 variations:

- a) Make an excerpt of the entire text.
- b) Make an excerpt of only selected information with respect to a specific research question.

Bibliographical Reference		Location (in the library)	If necessary: Key Words; Reference to Topic/Research Question/Chapter
Page/Paragraph	Paraphrase/Quotation	Comment	

## Summary

### Objectives:

- Store central contents and structural elements in your own words
- Check your own understanding of the text
- Facilitate the transition from reading to writing

### How you do it:

1. Do not depart from the original text but from your own annotations or your excerpt. This way, you can avoid sticking to the original wording of the text.
2. In preparation, you can note down one sentence per paragraph; in a second step, you can work on the conciseness of your summary. You can also practice cogency by adding further reduction to reduce the scope of your summary.

### SQ3R

[cf. Werder, Lutz von: Wissenschaftliche Texte kreativ lesen. Berlin; Milow: Schibri 1994, S. 51-55; Robinson, Francis Pleasant: Effective Study. New York: Harper & Brothers 1946.]

Objectives:

- Set your reading goals
- Plan your reading process
- Note down and check your reading results
- Transform what you read into your own words
- Improve your understanding of the text
- Memorize text contents by repeatedly employing different methods

How you do it:

1. **Survey: Skim through the text** to have a rough impression of its contents and structure. In doing so, read main headlines and sub-headlines, abstract and introduction, the first sentence of every paragraph and highlighted passages. (Objective: You activate your previous knowledge and contextualize what you just read. Your capacity of memorizing improves with recognition and repetition.)
2. **Question:** Formulate **three questions starting with a W** (Who?/Why?/What? Etc.) after reading main headlines and sub-headlines. (Objective: You activate your previous knowledge and interest to improve your motivation for reading the text and contextualizing information)
3. **Read: Read the text, paragraph by paragraph.** You may let your questions guide you through the text and do some highlighting work where necessary. (Objective: You improve your capacity of memorizing by doing focused reading work)
4. **Recite: From your memory,** note down **central information** in your own words, **paragraph by paragraph.** You may also add your own thoughts, go back to the paragraph, read it again, and then take notes. (Objective: You check if you have understood the text)
5. **Review/Repeat: Check your notes by going back to the next.** If you have more time, do a summary (e.g. as a text or illustration => see the methods on "Excerpt" or "Visualization"). (Objective: You create an overview of the text)

## Visualization

[cf. Stary, Joachim/Kretschmer, Horst: Umgang mit wissenschaftlicher Literatur. Eine Arbeitshilfe für das sozial- und geisteswissenschaftliche Studium. Frankfurt/M.: Cornelsen Scriptor 1994, S. 43-45, 121-126; Rost, Friedrich: Lern- und Arbeitstechniken für das Studium. 7. überarb. u. aktualis. Aufl. Wiesbaden: Springer 2012, S. 225-228; Brun, Georg/Hirsch Hadorn, Gertrude: Textanalyse in den Wissenschaften. Inhalte und Argumente analysieren und verstehen. Zürich: vdf 2009, S. 92-98]

### Objectives:

- Understand key terms and their interrelation
- Better understanding of the text
- Improve your memory capacities by actively engaging with textual content
- Faster access to your memory

### How you do it:

- Skim through the text
- Highlight key terms
- Choose either a) or b)

#### a) Text Network

- Frame key terms and interconnect them with annotated arrows. You may pair the arrows with full annotations or abbreviations, e.g.

Relation	Signal Term	Annotation
Property	has, is marked by, feature/aspect	-----pro----->
Is-a	Is an example of a certain type/in a certain category	-----i----->
Part-Whole	Is a part of/consists of	-----par----->
Condition	If/when	-----cond----->
Explanation	Because/since	-----e----->
Consequence	Leads to/causes/effects	-----cons----->
Comparison	Is like/corresponds/is similar/unlike	-----com----->
Purpose	So/that	-----pur----->
Means	By means of/in doing	-----m----->
Negation	Is not/no	-----n----->

#### b) Mind Map

(Tip: freeware for creating mind maps online: [http://freemind.sourceforge.net/wiki/index.php/Main\\_Page](http://freemind.sourceforge.net/wiki/index.php/Main_Page))

- Note the key topic in the center of a sheet of paper. Then, frame it, and add connecting lines with further key terms. Make additional sub-connections if needed.

## Socratic Reading

[cf. Werder, Lutz von: Wissenschaftliche Texte kreativ lesen. Berlin; Milow: Schibri 1994, S. 60-65; Werder, Lutz von: Grundkurs des wissenschaftlichen Lesens. Berlin; Milow: Schibri 1995, S. 33]

Objectives:

- Raised level of reading activity
- Critical examination of the text through questioning its terms/definitions/hypotheses/arguments

How you do it:

1. Skim through the text for a first impression
2. Create initial question to the text. Answer them in key notes. The questions below may give you first ideas.
3. While reading, question central statements and answer them in key notes.
4. Ask final question after completing the reading process. Answer them in key notes. Decide on how you evaluate the text.

Phase	Question	Answer
Preparation	<p>Initial Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is the author?</li> <li>• What does he/she say?</li> <li>• Who is the audience/the recipient?</li> <li>• In what way?</li> <li>• To what end?</li> <li>• What is the effect created?</li> <li>• When (historic/social/academic context)?</li> <li>• Where (context of the publication)?</li> <li>• Transform title and subtitle into a question</li> </ul>	
Reading	<p>Collateral Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the goal of the text?</li> <li>• What does this mean?</li> <li>• How is it justified?</li> <li>• What may disprove this?</li> <li>• What may prove this?</li> <li>• Who is being quoted and who not?</li> </ul>	
Final Evaluation	<p>Final Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What was a main idea/a peripheral idea?</li> <li>• How was the text structured?</li> <li>• What are the rhetoric devices? What are the structuring devices (introduction, main body, conclusion)?</li> <li>• What is the value for academic discourse?</li> <li>• What questions remain unanswered?</li> </ul> <p>Evaluation count: Catalogue/Quote/Paraphrase/Criticize?</p>	Monitoring of the quality of answers given