



Reading in English

Reading fluently and tackling complex texts are very important skills in your studies.

This resource covers 6 strategies you can start applying straight away to improve your reading skills.

1. Start with the basics

To understand more challenging concepts in a new area, it helps to become familiar with basic concepts first.

This way you can link new ideas to what you already know. You might start with a social media post, then a newspaper article or a review before tackling an academic article or textbook.

2. Understand your purpose

Be clear on why you are reading a text. Do you need to understand a new methodology better, have an overview of a historical development, or explore a model of good writing? Come up with some guiding questions for yourself to help keep you on track.

Once you know what your specific purpose is, you are more likely to stay focused as you read.

3. Practise active reading

Use active reading strategies to familiarise yourself with the content and structure of the text before reading it in more depth.

Scan through titles, subheadings and topic sentences first to get a sense of the overall message of the text before studying it in depth.

4. Question the text

Read in 'chunks' or sections. Pause regularly to check you understand the connections between sections, and ask yourself questions based on your pre-reading and what you have learned from the text so far.

Don't worry if your questions aren't perfect or your answers aren't correct. The purpose of asking yourself those questions is simply to keep you alert as you read.

5. Read widely

Read widely and read often. Think about all your interests and look for reading material in all of them. Don't limit yourself to course materials: seek out novels, blogs, social media – everything that interests you. Make reading a regular part of your day.

6. Read out loud

Reading out loud will help you understand the rhythm of the text, and is also an easy way to practise speaking without having to think of a topic first.

Pay attention to sentence structures and turns of phrase that you can use in your own speaking and writing. Remember that you are often reading in order to write or speak about a text, for example in assignments or conversations with friends, so read with that purpose in mind.

Bonus tip: read socially!

We tend to think of reading as a solitary activity, but it doesn't have to be. For example, you can join a group of friends to read together.

You can read out loud to yourself as well, but an added benefit of group reading is that it can help develop your listening skills and understand different accents better.

Reading academic texts is not the same as reading newspapers or novels, so practise active reading strategies to make your reading time most effective.