



CRITICAL READING QUICK GUIDE

At university you are expected to use **critical reasoning** to solve problems and discuss issues. Critical Reading is the first step in developing a critical thinking capacity. When you read with a critical eye you question the information presented rather than accepting it as true.

Focus your reading

Always read with a goal. Don't waste time reading from start to finish without key achievements in mind.

Read with a set purpose, this could include:

- topic overview
- key words and definitions
- to understand the main theme or theory
- to look for key evidence including stats, graphs, or data

Read with a purpose

Reading from the start to the end of a text is not a great strategy. A better method is to use a purposeful reading strategy such as the one below:

Step 1 – Skim for overview (quick)

- read the first and last paragraphs
- read the first sentence of each paragraph
- read the section headings
- look for key terms and phrases
- look at graphs and tables
- read the discussion questions at the end of the chapter in textbooks

Step 2 – Dip into key paragraphs

- read the paragraphs of the text which are most important (discussion, results,

recommendations)

- read the parts of the text which will help you answer the critical reading questions below

Step 3 – Read in detail

- read in detail now that you have a strong understanding of the main purpose and structure of the text
- make notes in your own words so that you will understand them later
- note the page numbers and references as you take notes

Critical reading questions

Some things you may think about as you read:

1. What is the main argument presented by the author(s) (WHAT)?
2. What is the author's aim (WHY)? What does the author want me to think/believe?
3. Which discipline is it located in, in which country was it published (WHERE)?
4. Is the author a key writer in the field (WHO)?
5. What format is it? Journal article, textbook, popular press. How could these be constructed differently or with different purposes?
6. What type of text is it: research, ideological, theoretical, conceptual, literature review, critique?
7. How does the author collection data and what type of data is presented (qualitative or quantitative) (HOW)?
8. What are the strengths of the article? Think about academic quality, integrity and rigour, internal logic, data analysis.
9. What are the weaknesses of the article? Gaps in logic, lack of convincing evidence and so on.
10. What is the article's relevance to your weekly topic/subject?