

## CREATE AN OVERVIEW OF WHAT YOU NEED TO READ

Always get an overview of a text before you begin reading it. Try to determine which genre the text belongs to (e.g. textbook, scientific article, a work or?) and why have you been asked to read it. Here are five methods to create an overview of a new text.

### 1) Use the overview elements of the text

You can start by finding the overview elements of the text and using them to identify the structure and central points of the text.

- › Title
- › Table of contents
- › Headlines
- › Preface
- › Abstract/Summary
- › Back cover
- › Illustrations
- › Keywords in the margin
- › Highlighted words
- › Text boxes
- › Figures, graphs, models
- › Summaries
- › Index

### 2) Read the beginning and end of each chapter

Many textbooks lead the reader through the book. Typically, each chapter starts by providing an overview of key points and the chapter's link with other chapters. Some textbooks summarise the key points at the end of each chapter.

### 3) Read the introduction and the conclusion

The introduction and the conclusion of a scientific article will provide a good overview of the rest of the text. The introduction presents the focus of the text and positions it in relation to other specialist texts. The conclusion summarises important issues and tries to answer these based on the analyses.

### 4) Gain an overview by writing, drawing or discussing

In general, it's a good idea to *always* work critically with the text you are reading. This also applies when you are in the process of creating an overview. Combine the introductory reading with other overview activities, e.g.:

- Create a mind map of your first impression of the links and key points in the text
- Write briefly about your first impression of the text
- Discuss the key points of the text with your fellow students
- Ask your lecturer which texts/chapters are interconnected and what the main themes are.

### Other tips: Look up the topic, title, author and words

You can start by looking up the title, author, or both, in a popular scientific book, a reference work, on Google, on Wikipedia or similar. Not to use these sources, but in order to create a first impression of the text by reading 'around' it.

If the text contains many words that you are not familiar with (or if it is written in a foreign language), scroll through it and identify the important words and concepts. Look them up and make a note of their meaning before you begin reading.

Remember! You need to focus on the text you are reading – looking up words and terms often turns into an act of procrastination.