Efficient reading

Efficient reading is active. It integrates pre-reading strategies (see below) with an active note making/mapping process.

Pre–reading
Pre-reading allows the reader to build up background knowledge and to select what to read. Pre-reading involves
- survey/overview
- skim
- scan

Survey/overview
Look quickly and superficially at the whole text.
What is it? What is it about? What is likely to be covered?

Skim
Read quickly and superficially:
- general idea
- knowledge of context

*How to skim*
- read the introduction and first sentence of each paragraph (topic sentences) conclusion
- read any headings
- look for linking words—link ideas (therefore, in addition, because, resulting in, since, compare/contrast words.)

Scan
Reading quickly for:
- specific information
- knowledge of context

*How to scan*
- answer questions who, what, where, when, why
- look for—key words, phrases, dates or names (look for capital letters and numbers)
- move eyes systematically over page

Try this method for more efficient reading.

1. **Read the title and the introduction.**
   Highlight information that tells the reader what the article is about. Highlight the main points to be covered.
2. **Read the conclusion.**
   Highlight the part where the main points are repeated.
3. **Read any headings, sub-headings and words in bold or italics.**
   Highlight key words
4. **Read the topic sentence** for each paragraph (usually the first or second sentence).
   Highlight key words in each topic sentence. Then put the article away.
5. **Brainstorm** all the information you can remember from the article.
   Use paper **horizontally/landscape** style so more information can fit on the page.
   Write down all **key words** you can remember.
   Draw **diagrams** or **illustrations**.
6. If relevant, read the article in depth.
Understanding what you read

Dealing with unfamiliar words -

- Pre-read to build up background knowledge.
- Read the whole sentence; do not focus on difficult words.
- Read the whole paragraph if a sentence is difficult to understand.
- Try to read whole thoughts not single words.
- Focus on general understanding, not word by word.

Use the context

Below are techniques writers use to help their readers understand the meaning of new or difficult words.

1. **Restatement** - restates or explains the meaning of difficult words.
   Look for these words or, in other words, that is, such as, which is, that is to say or –(dash).

2. **Example** - explains the meaning by giving an example.
   Look for language like: such as, for example, for instance, including.

3. **Comparison** - a difficult word is often compared to a familiar word.
   The following words are often used to show comparison: like, as, as if.

4. **Contrast** - a difficult word may be contrasted with familiar word.
   The following words show contrast: but, on the other hand, however, yet, not although.

**Remember!**

1. Use of pre-reading techniques enhance cognition, that is learning.
2. Use of concept maps, for example, diagrams and flow charts, is a useful way of organising information.
3. Pre-reading, like other preparation strategies is a useful tool.
4. Although many students do not use them, pre-reading strategies are a very useful study tool.

Use a dictionary effectively

Buy a pocket sized dictionary. Ask for advice about what will be the best dictionary for you. Use your dictionary after you have done the pre-reading and know the general idea.
Try to look up only the key words; do not waste time looking up unimportant words.
Use an English/English dictionary — translate only as a last resort.