

ASKING QUESTIONS AS YOU READ

An effective process for reading is to skim through the text first to get the gist of it and then decide whether it might be useful for your purposes. If it is, you will probably need to read for detail, and at a deeper, critical level. Asking questions is crucial at all stages of reading; this will help to make your reading more active and efficient. This tip sheet has a range of questions that you may find useful. However, it is not an exhaustive list - there are many other questions you will think of as you're reading.

To begin, here are two main questions to think about throughout the reading process that will help to make your reading active:

- How does the text relate to what you already know?
- How might you use the information from the text?

The author's purpose

- Why has the author written the material?
- Are these purposes explicitly stated?
- Are there other implicit purposes?
- For whom is the material intended?

Content

- On which aspects of the topic has the author chosen to concentrate and which to omit?
- Does the text advocate for a particular position? What is it, and do you agree or disagree with this?
- Is the material presented in breadth or depth?
- What is the main argument or theme in the material?
- What explanation or evidence is used to support these main points?
- What are the author's underlying assumptions? Are these explicitly stated?
- Has a contemporary issue or a particular philosophy influenced the author's purpose?
- Is there any evidence of deliberate bias, such as choice of sources or interpretation of material?
- Do the facts seem correct?
- Is any irrelevant material included?
- Does any graphic material illustrate or restate the written content?
- Which of your questions about the subject does the author answer?
- How are the contents related to what you know about the topic?
- Do any items puzzle or intrigue you?

Structure

- How does the author introduce the subject?
- What framework is used to organise the material? Is the framework clearly explained?
- How is the content organised and developed within the framework?
- Does the author recapitulate what has been said at appropriate points?
- How does the conclusion relate to the introduction and to the rest of the material?

Style and format

- In what style has the material been written? For example, is it formal or informal, simple or complex, didactic or persuasive, narrative or analytical?
- How does the style and format influence your reaction to the material?

Analysis questions

- How?
- Why?
- What are the reasons for...?
- What are the types of...?
- What are the functions of...?
- What are the causes/results of...?
- What is the relationship between... and...?
- What is the similarity or difference between... and...?
- How does ...apply to ...?
- What is (are) the problems or conflicts or issues?
- What are possible solutions/resolutions to these problems or conflicts or issues?
- What is the main argument or thesis of...?
- How is this argument developed?
- What evidence or proof or support is offered?
- What are other theories/arguments from other authors?

Hypothesis questions

- If... occurs, then what happens?
- If... had happened, then what would be different?
- What does theory X predict will happen?

Evaluation questions

- Is... correct or incorrect?
- Is ...effective or ineffective?
- Is... clear or unclear?
- Is... relevant or irrelevant?
- Is... logical or illogical?
- Is... applicable or not applicable to ...?
- Is... proven or not proven?
- Is... ethical or unethical?
- What are the advantages or disadvantages of...?
- What are the pros or cons of...?
- What is the best solution to the problem/conflict/issue?
- What should or should not happen?
- Do I agree or disagree?
- What is my opinion?
- What is my support for my opinion?