Reading Strategies – Articles/Chapters

1. Identify Purpose
   - Identify the purpose of your reading to determine the best reading strategy:
     - reading for general understanding, such as for tutorial discussion?
       - survey, skim & in-depth
     - reading for specific information or facts, like an assignment?
       - scan & in-depth
     - reading for instructions on how to do something?
       - survey, scan & in-depth

2. Reading strategies for academic text
   - Think about what you know about the article already; consider:
     - what is this article about?
     - what do I know about this topic already?
     - what more do I want to know about this topic?
     - who is the author and what are the author’s credentials?

   a. Survey
      - A survey is a quick ‘preview’ of the text:
        - read title of the article.
        - read the abstract or summary of the article (if it has one).
        - read the subtitles or section headings of article (if it has these).
        - if the article has tables, graphs, illustrations and text boxes, read them and their captions.

   b. Skim
      - Skim reading is a ‘light’ reading of the text for just the main points:
        - read the introduction.
          - pay close attention to the last few sentences of the introduction, because this is where the author states the main argument.
        - read only the first sentence of each paragraph.
          - usually, the first sentence is the topic sentence, which states the main idea of the paragraph.
          - if you are not sure what the main idea of the paragraph is from the first sentence, read the second sentence as well.
        - read the conclusion.
      - By now, you should know the main argument and the main points of the article.
c. Scan

- Scan read when you are looking for specific information:
  - make a list of keywords related to the topic you are researching;
  - search through the text for these keywords;
  - underline or mark the passages containing these keywords;
  - read these passages in-depth.

d. In-depth

- Read thoroughly, identifying the main idea of each section and each paragraph, and considering the evidence, data and/or examples the author uses.
  - consider, too, whether you agree or disagree with the author and why.
- Keep your purpose in mind
  - you can move to the next paragraph when you are confident that you know what the author’s point and main example is.

3. Note Making (see Note-Taking handout)

- It is best to make notes after completing this process: survey, skim, then read in-depth
  - after in-depth reading, skim read again while making notes, recording the key points
  - record article’s bibliographical information (if journal article, you’ll need author, date, article title, journal title, volume and issue number, page range and retrieval information [DOI, database, or URL address]; if chapter in book, you’ll need author, date, article title, book title, editors, volume number, page range, place of publication and publishers); this is crucial for referencing in assignments
  - make notes in your own words (paraphrase), recording page number
    - if you take passages word-for-word, make sure you put them in “quotation marks” so, for assignments, you will know which words are the author’s

4. Reading tips

- Make time to read
  - clear some time (at least an hour) in a quiet, comfortable space.
- Read actively
  - think of other ideas and/or examples that back up the author’s points.
  - think of ideas and/or examples that challenge the author’s points.
    - it can help to have a debate with the author.
  - after each paragraph, feel free to stop and think about what the author has written.
- Make a list of questions based on the 5WH words (who, why, where, what, when & how) to focus your reading
- Read out loud
  - it is often easier to remember spoken words than words we have seen written on a page.
  - reading aloud is especially helpful when learning to pronounce difficult words.
- Keep a glossary
  - write down unfamiliar words and technical terms in a notebook and check their meaning in a dictionary (especially a specialist dictionary; eg. medical dictionary).
  - Review this glossary weekly to check how your vocabulary is progressing