# Reading Skills by Dr Jo Cormac [Video Transcript]

This video will provide you with some reading strategies to help you read an academic text more efficiently. The main things you need to remember are: read actively, be strategic, read critically, and review.

## Read actively.

Reading an academic text is very different from reading a novel. For a start, you will usually be reading with a particular purpose in mind. Make sure that purpose is clear before you start reading.

Ask yourself: what am I looking for? Are there any particular questions I want this book to answer for me?

This will focus your attention. You’ll concentrate for longer and get more out of your reading.

If you are reading to prepare for an essay, keep the question in mind. Keep returning to it and think about how what you are reading will help you answer that question.

If you are reading from a photocopy or printout, don’t be afraid to annotate any ideas that relate to your question. Highlight keywords.

## Be strategic.

When you start a university course, the amount of reading you are required to do can be intimidating. Fortunately, you won’t usually have to read every word in every book you reference. You only have a certain amount of time to complete essays and to prepare for seminars and other tasks, therefore it is crucial to learn to be strategic.

Before you start reading a book, use the contents page, index, any summary passages and headings. This will help you narrow down your search for the information you need. Introductions and conclusions can also be very helpful for finding the main ideas. If you’re reading an article you should also use the abstract as well as the introduction and conclusion. This will give you a very brief summary of the author’s methods and findings. Then you can decide if you need to read the whole article.

If an article or a book chapter does appear useful quickly scan the page looking out for key ideas. You could also search pdfs for key words.

If you decide the material is not relevant, don’t linger! Move on and read something else.

## Reading critically.

When you have found some literature that is useful, read it critically. This means you should question it. What is the main idea or argument? Why should you believe what the author is saying – what evidence do they give? Has the author made assumptions? Are they biased towards a particular point of view? Do the conclusions follow logically from the facts? How does it fit in with other literature you have read? Does it build on earlier material? Does it disagree with or support other writers? Is it more or less convincing? Why?

## Review to make sure you’ve understood.

Finally, when you have finished reading an academic text, review the main arguments. Could you put the idea into your own words? If the answer is yes that probably means you’ve understood.

Try to summarise what you have read as you go along, then you can easily review it later; have a look at the skills hub video on note-taking for tips. If there is anything you haven’t understood read those parts again.

So overall you need to read actively, strategically, critically, and remember to review your reading and notes.

Thank you.