**Reading with a purpose**

**Questioning the text**

1. **What is the main idea here?**

Reading the first sentences of all the paragraphs will give you a skeleton framework for the whole piece. This is very useful for getting the overview and for a writing a summary.

1. **What is the author’s argument?**

Analyse the argument – is the author for or against it?

1. **Where is the author coming from?**

Find out if these differences are important to your academic practice.

1. **Have I encountered this argument before? Where?**

This gets you thinking about what you are reading – it is getting you to make connections and make them conscious.

1. **Have I encountered a different argument somewhere? Where?**

Again, this is getting you to make connections – and to notice consciously the arguments that contradict or go against each other.

1. **What evidence is being offered?**

Make sure you know what counts as a valid argument

1. **Is the evidence valid? Why do I think it is or is not valid?**

Make notes or put a question mark to show that you disagree with something or jot the name down of the person who says something different.

1. **How does this connect with what I have already read/heard?**

Sometimes what you read will reinforce what you know or believe already; sometimes it may make you question that.

1. **What is the author’s final point?**

Usually the ‘point’ is in the final sentence of the paragraph.

**Tip:** Some people highlight the different parts of the paragraph in different colours – argument in blue, evidence in green, author’s position in yellow etc. Think of a system for yourself.

**Review Questions**

1. **Are your notes sourced?**

Have you recorded author, date, title, publisher, town? Have you noted pages numbers besides quotes?

1. **Have you copied quotes out accurately?**

You must get it exactly right. You can abbreviate a quote, but you must put in an ellipsis (dot, dot, dot …) to show where you made the cut.

1. **Do your notes do what you wanted them to?**

If you needed a few quotes for a piece of writing – do you have them? Are they sourced? If you need to gain the overview of a topic – have you?

1. **Scan!**

If anything is missing from your notes – scan the piece again to find the missing bits of information.

1. **Is there anything else that I ought to read now?**

Many texts will refer to other people (often as their own evidence): you can read what these people have written if you feel it is relevant and you have the time to do so.

1. **Do I stop reading now?**

At some point – yes. You must read widely, but don’t use it as an excuse to put off writing.

Taken from: Burns. T. (2006) *Essential Study Skills. The complete guide to success @ university* Sage. London.