

Reading Strategies & Critical Thinking Skills

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Academic & Career Services

The University of Winnipeg is in Treaty One territory and the land on which we gather is the traditional territory of Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene Peoples, and the homeland of the Métis Nation. *We acknowledge that our water is sourced from Shoal Lake 40 First Nation.*



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READING STRATEGIES



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Agenda

1. Reading environment
2. Reading method: SQ3R
3. Reading rates
 - Tips for increasing reading speed
4. Finding the Main Idea



1. The Reading Environment

- Lighting
- Reading Position
- Focal Distance
- Distractions





2. Reading Strategy: SQ3R

Survey

Question

Read

Recite

Review

Survey

Examine:

- The title page
- Table of contents
- Index, glossary, appendix
- Study questions, guides
- Chapter headings, section heading and/or margin guides
- Summaries
- Maps, charts, diagrams and tables

Questions

- Create questions for yourself to keep in mind
- You can easily create questions by looking at sub headings within the chapter
- Sometimes text books have summaries at the end of each chapters with questions to help review the chapter
- Keep assignment requirements/questions in mind



Read

- Underline
 - To trigger recall and monitor comprehension
 - Only main ideas
- Use margins for key ideas and to organize concepts; use symbols
- Reflect on what you already know
- Take notes
- Look for the answers to your questions
- Be present

Example: Underlining

Marketing research has shown that during the adoption process, there can be five different consumer personality types: innovators, early adopters, early majority adopters, late majority adopters, and laggards.

Source: McWhorter. K.T. (2006). Study and critical thinking skills in college (6th ed.). New York: Pearson Longman

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Recite

- Summarize in your own words
- Talk about what you have just read, to yourself or someone else
- Ask yourself questions about the text
- Test your recall of underlined information

Review: Within 24 hours/Weekly/Monthly

- Read highlights and underlining in text
- Read notes
- Recite main points again
 - Test yourself with flash cards
- Answer your questions





3. Reading Rates

- **Skimming**
 - to find specific information, get the general idea, review
- **Rapid**
 - to review familiar material, get the main idea, read light material for relaxation or pleasure
- **Normal**
 - to answer a specific question, note details, solve problems, understand the relationship of details to main ideas
- **Careful**
 - to master content, evaluate material, outline, summarize, paraphrase, analyze, memorize

Increasing Reading Speed

- Consider your environment; relax
- Keep your eyes moving: avoid focusing on every word
- Avoid ineffective habits: eg. sub-vocalizing
- Practice: find books you love
- Try to improve your vocabulary
- Skim for 5 minutes a day
- Increase gradually; set a time limit



Finding the Main Idea in a Paragraph...

- Consider topic sentences and concluding sentences
- Repeating words or details within the paragraph
- Titles/Headings



Example: Finding the main idea

Analyzing Texts

Much of academic writing is analytical. You read of the causes of a revolution, of the effects of inflation, or of the relative importance of heredity and environment; you write about the meaning of a short story, the causes and effects of poverty, the strengths and weaknesses of some proposed legislative action. And much of this reading and writing is based on the analysis of *texts*. As we note in Chapter 1, the word “text” derives from the Latin for “woven” (as in textile), and it has come to refer not only to words stitched together into sentences (whether novel or letter or advertisement), but also to all kinds of objects of interpretation: films, paintings, music videos, even on a food plate.

From: Chapter 7 of *A Short Guide to College Writing*, (2008). S. Barnet, P. Bellanca, M. Stubbs.
Penguin Academics. New York.



Example: Finding the main idea

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Example: Finding the main idea

Academic reading and writing is analytical and is based on the analysis of texts, including films, paintings and music.

From: Chapter 7 of *A Short Guide to College Writing*, (2008). S. Barnet, P. Bellanca, M. Stubbs. Penguin Academics. New York.

Summary

- Reading environment is important
- Be an active reader: Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review
- Reading rates: choose the one appropriate for the task



CRITICAL THINKING



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Agenda

1. What is Critical Thinking?
2. Strategies for Critical Thinking
3. Habits of Mind - Attitudes of Critical Thinkers





Critical Thinking



Critical Thinking Is...

- Thorough Thinking
 - Asking questions, challenging current thinking, uncovering assumptions, bias, prejudice
- The willingness to change your opinion, consider other perspectives
- A learned skill
 - Used when you read, write, speak and listen
 - A major goal of a liberal university degree

Critical Thinking Process...

1. Observe, Study and Research
2. Participate in the information you've studied
3. Identify missing information and draw conclusions from the facts
4. Challenge and Evaluate the assumptions and opinions on the subject
5. Analyze and Challenge arguments

Strategies: Ask Questions

Knowing and understanding:

- Who wrote this material? Where did it first appear?
- What is the issue being discussed? What stand does the writer take?
- What are their reasons?
- Why was this text written?
- What's the main idea?
- Why is this important?
- What have others written on this topic?



Challenge Current Thinking

- Are children of alcoholics more likely to be alcoholics themselves? Researchers sampled 451 people in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) to see how many could say that one or both of their parents were alcoholics. People used in the study currently attend AA somewhere in Ohio, Michigan or Indiana and were asked by people in charge of the local AA programs to volunteer to fill out a survey. The research found that 77 percent of the respondents had at least one parent they classified as an alcoholic. The study also surveyed 451 people randomly from the same states who claim not to be heavy drinkers. Of the non-heavy drinkers, 23 percent would label at least one of their parents as alcoholic.
- Source: Browne, M. N. & Keeley, S. M. (2007). *Asking the Right Questions: A Guide to Critical Thinking*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

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- How well are the viewpoints supported?
- What are other viewpoints on this?
- What are the implications?
- How is this related to other issues?
- What other solutions are there for this issue?

Strategies: Uncover assumptions and biases

Assumptions:

- unconscious generalizations
- lead to unsupported personal opinions
- result in bias and sometimes prejudice
 - Don't know what you don't know...





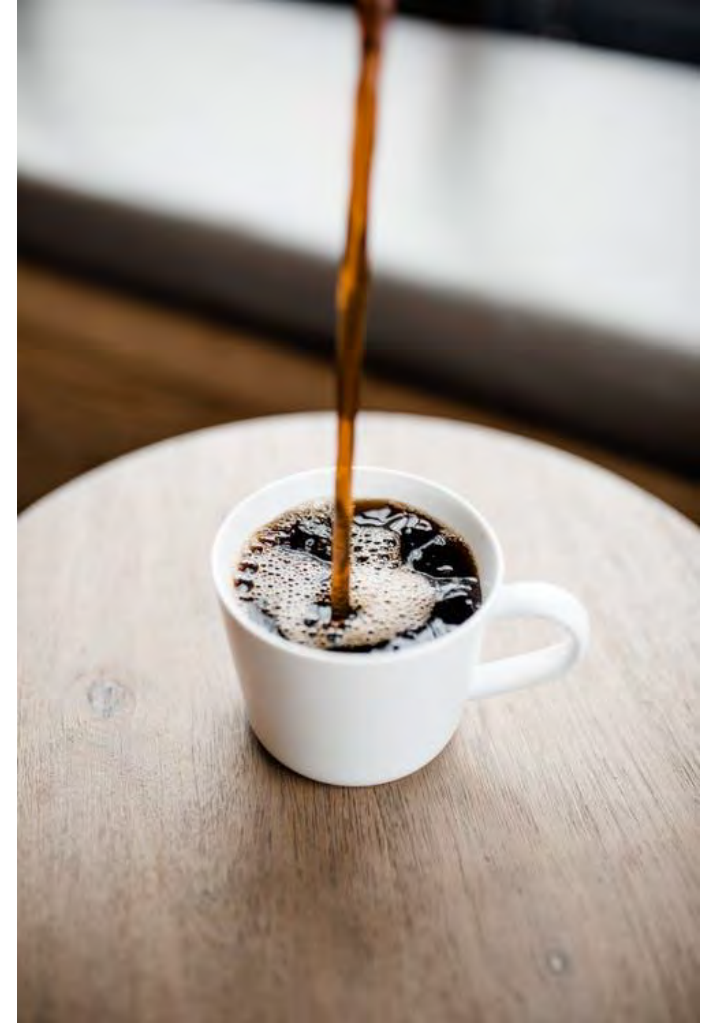
Uncovering Assumptions and Biases

“I don’t worry about saving money for the future. I think life is meant to be enjoyed today – not later.”

Source: “Becoming a Master Student”. P.239, 2012.

Uncovering Assumptions and Biases

“There is nothing wrong with drinking 5 cups of coffee per day. Other people do it all the time.”



Common Mistakes in Logic

- Jumping to conclusions
- Attacking the person (ad hominem)
- Appealing to an 'authority'
- Thinking in all-or-nothing terms
- Basing arguments on emotion*



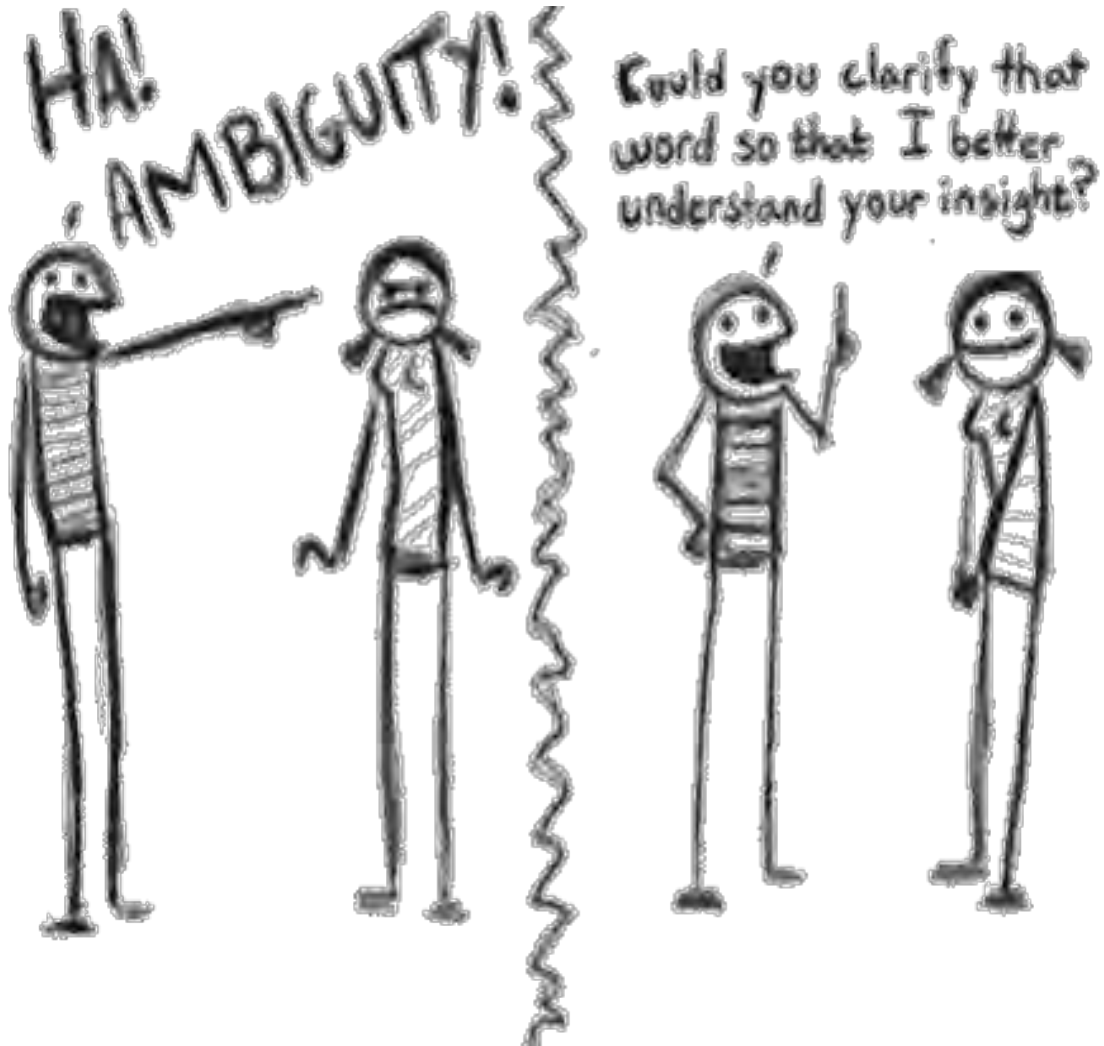
Habits of Mind

- Habits of mind are attitudes and beliefs that influence how you approach the world (i.e. inquiring attitude, open mind, respect for truth, etc.).
 1. Consider your intellectual commitments, values and standards.
 2. Do you approach problems with:
 - a) an open mind,
 - b) a respect for truth and,
 - c) an inquiring attitude?
- Try to work these qualities into your daily life.



Habits of Mind (continued)...

3. Be willing to say “I don’t know”
4. Take risks
5. Practice tolerance
 - watch for *hot spots*



Understand Before Criticizing

For more information

Check out our website

<https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/academic-advising/study-skills-workshops.html>

OR

Student > Academic Advising > Study Skills Workshops

Make an appointment with a Student Success Advisor

<https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/academic-advising/>

Email: studentsuccess@uwinnipeg.ca