

## Frequently asked questions

### 1 How can I read more quickly?

There are strategies you can employ to improve both your overall reading speed and also how efficiently you read, so that you can complete reading tasks in less time.

- If you currently read texts word by word, reading in larger chunks can increase your reading speed.
- Do you read out loud? Reading silently is usually much faster than reading aloud. Some people understand they read best if they *hear* the words rather than just *seeing* them. If you read aloud for this reason, try recording yourself so that you can re-read 'by ear' rather than by eye.
- Do you track with your finger along the line? You can train your eyes to move down the text more directly in order to help you read more quickly.
- Do you read the whole of every book? With academic texts, you often just need to read the sections that are immediately relevant to your work.
- Do you get stuck in complex material? Background knowledge of a subject will help you increase your reading speed and your understanding.
- Do you keep checking back along the line or re-reading words you have just read? You can learn to improve the flow of your reading by keeping your eyes moving forward.
- Experiencing visual difficulties? Do you find that the words seem to jump up off the page or that text moves or glares? There are practical solutions that may help such as using a coloured filter.

### 2 How do I know what I should read?

With academic texts, you often just need to read the sections that are immediately relevant to your work.

- Pay careful attention to the reading lists provided by your tutors. Always be sure that you are clear what you need to read. If in doubt, ask your tutor what is expected.
- Evaluate each text for its relevance to your assignment and select the information that relates most exactly to your assignment title.
- Select texts that you know are reliable.
- Read the most up-to-date texts whenever possible.
- Judge how much you need to read to get the right level of information for your level of study and for the topic your assignment is based on.

### 3 Do I have to read everything on the reading list?

Usually, your reading list will include a mixture of both required reading and recommended reading. You need to find out what is essential to read, and what is optional. Typically, the reading list will

provide several books that cover the same topic so that, if one or more are out of the library, you can read an alternative. You are expected to read a selection of books and articles, or at least the relevant sections of these, rather than relying on a single text for your assignment.

#### **4 What should I do if I can't find a book on the reading list?**

Don't worry if you can't find every book on the reading list. It is probable that your tutor will have assumed that some books will be out on loan, and will have provided alternatives. The librarian may be able to recall the book for you, order a copy from another library, or recommend alternatives to those on your list. You can also browse the electronic index to see what else has been published recently on the same topic. It is important to look for books as soon as you receive the reading list so as to give yourself the best chance of looking at all the items on the list and deciding which ones you want to read. Above all, make sure that you hand your assignment in on time – it isn't an acceptable excuse to hand in work late simply because the books were unavailable.

#### **5 How can I stop myself from falling asleep when I'm reading?**

Falling asleep when reading can be an indicator of a number of things:

- You may need an eye-test if your eyes become tired quickly when reading; it is worth seeing an optometrist.
- You may need to adjust the time of day you do your reading and make sure you are in a setting that suits you best.
- You may need to use different reading strategies so that you actively engage in the reading process, rather than simply letting the words wash over you.
- You may need to take frequent short breaks if your mind drifts easily.
- The obvious may be true: you may just need more sleep!