



Efficient and Critical Reading TASKS

Academic Reading – Critical Reading

Aims:

to raise awareness of critical reading, focusing on skills of identifying fact/opinion

to provide practice in questioning a text

Review of efficient reading skills

Task 1

a) Look at the reading techniques on the left. One of these is NOT a good idea. Which one and why? Cross it out!

b) Match the technique on the left with the reason on the right.

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| 1. Read the title | <i>A - to look for specific information</i> |
| 2. Read the author and date of publication | <i>B - to save time</i> |
| 3. Skim | <i>C - to predict content</i> |
| 4. Scan | <i>D - to find the parts most relevant for you</i> |
| 5. Read with questions in mind | <i>E - to get an idea of the argument and how the text is organised</i> |
| 6. Translate the text | <i>F - to gain a deeper understanding of the text</i> |
| 7. Take notes | <i>G - to summarise and remember what you've read</i> |
| 8. Try to guess meaning of new words | <i>H - to evaluate the importance of the text</i> |
| 9. Read more than once | <i>I - to focus on sections</i> |
| 10. Focus on key arguments, slowing down to ensure full understanding. | |

c) Which of the strategies above have you been using? How have they worked?

Critical Reading (1) What is Critical Reading?

Task 2: Read the following about aspects of critical reading. Is there anything you would add?



- Being critical when you are reading is a more specialised and sophisticated way to absorb and analyse information for a specific purpose. You are reading for content, looking for the best explanation or answer.
- Critical reading is a slower process and you must define your purpose before you begin. You will absorb more of the detail to make sure you understand what you are reading and how it relates to your topic.
- Critical reading challenges the reader and demands a greater amount of concentration. Read with a questioning mind. Identify arguments made by the author and analyse other concepts and theories.
- When you are reading, pause every so often and think about what you have read. Do not just accept what the author has written.
- Critical reading means that you have to evaluate the arguments in the text – you need to decide if the conclusions/opinions are justified (this means looking at the evidence presented). It also means distinguishing fact from opinion, and looking at the arguments 'for' and 'against' the various points.

Fact vs Opinion

In order to evaluate a text, you need to be able to distinguish what is fact and what is opinion. Sometimes this is easy, but not always. Another challenge is to notice when opinion is presented as fact.

Example – Britain is a member of the EU

Being a member of the EU brings more benefits than drawbacks

Task 2 Look at the 8 sentences below and decide which are **fact** (uncontested) and which are **opinion** (contested). Highlight any language which tells you it is **fact/opinion**.

- 1 The prospect of battle between nations over a shared resource vital for life is an unappealing one.
- 2 As the prime minister noted last month, 40% of the globe's population is already short of fresh water and, on current trends, this will rise to 50% by 2030.
- 3 A rapid growth in ecotourism has been at the expense of indigenous peoples.
- 4 Authenticity is not an inherent property, but the product of a struggle, a social process in which competing interests argue for their own right to authenticate.
- 5 Nature is a money spinner. Ecuador earns over \$100m a year from 60,000 visitors to the Galapagos, for instance, and Kenya as much income from its safari holidays.
- 6 Tourists visit Arizona in a diversified way. They go there to gaze at natural wonders, but also for outdoor exercise, food, shopping and gaming.
7. In his article, Collins asserts that if “an explicit natural capital perspective” is adopted, current sustainable tourism development cannot be considered as genuinely sustainable.
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Questioning the text: Reading as conversation



If someone is in front of you, telling you their view on an issue, you can ask questions in order to clarify, challenge and further your understanding. With a text, the writer may not be physically beside you, but they are there on the paper: in the words of the text. Your role as a reader is just as it might be in a conversation - entering into a dialogue through commenting, clarifying and assessing. Asking the text questions keeps you active and critical. Not all your questions will be answered, but the ones which are not will keep you thinking as you read other texts.

Some Questions to ask when Reading.

- What do I already know about this topic?
- From the title/author/publication what do I *expect* to read?
- What is the main argument or finding? What is the writer trying to persuade me of?



- What are the premises? Are they based on facts, theories or earlier authors? Do they build a strong argument? Can I spot any flaws or inconsistencies?
- Am I convinced? Why? Why not? Can I put this into words?
- Are alternative conclusions/opinions presented?
- If I could ask this author one question, what would it be?