

Reading Strategies: Speed, Main Ideas, & Note-Taking

Multilingual Student Support (MSS)
Camosun College



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Goals

Get ideas for how to...



Read faster



Read smarter: before, during, and after reading



Take good notes

Reading Questions

Consider...

1. What helps you read faster? (What slows you down?)
2. How can you read more efficiently?
3. How can you take good notes?

Reading Speed

A woman with dark hair is shown in profile, smiling as she reads a book. She is wearing a dark top and a ring on her finger. The background is a bright, out-of-focus window with multiple panes. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent dark blue and black background.

Tips for Improving Reading Speed

(Millett, 2013)

- Avoid difficult textbooks for reading speed training
- Choose lots of shorter, easier readings with comprehension questions
- Aim for 75% comprehension
- Maintain a steady pace – don't stop to look up vocabulary
- Track with your eyes – not a finger or pencil
- Use training software

Reading Speed Training

Read and Track Progress

- Regularly read short articles at the same difficulty level
- Example: [4000 BNC Readings](#) (Millett, 2013)
- Time yourself and answer comprehension questions
- Track your speed (words per minute) and comprehension



WORDS PER MINUTE	220																				
	210																				
	200																				
	190																				
	180																				
	170																				
	160																				
	150																				
	140																				
	130																				
	120																				
110																					
100																					
90																					
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10										
	COMPREHENSION (/ 10 POINTS)																				

Reading Speed Training

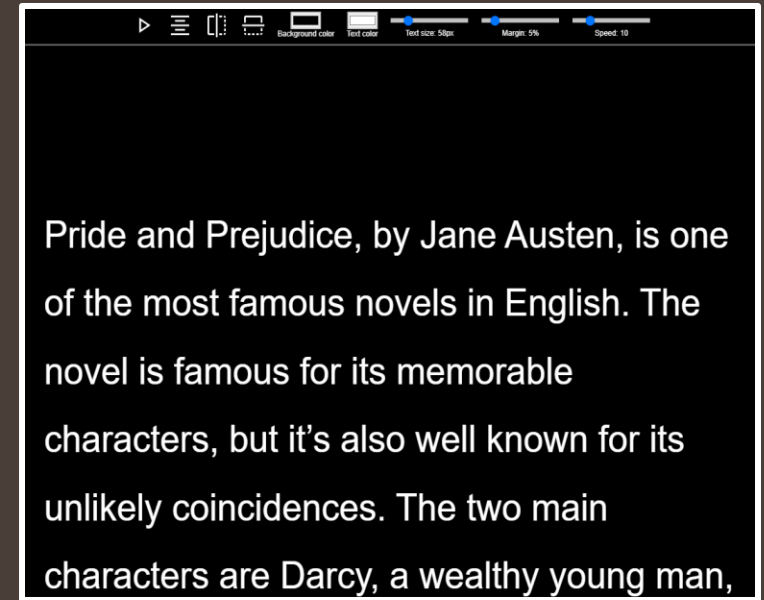
Digital Reader

- Copy and paste your text into a digital reader
 - Example: cueprompter.com



OR

- Practice at a reading speed website
 - Example: [BreakingNewsEnglish](https://BreakingNewsEnglish.com)
- Adjust speed as you improve



CuePrompter.com, 2023

Active Reading Strategies

Before, during, and after your reading

Active Reading Strategies

Before You Read

- Find your mind
- Check your purpose: do you need to read all?
- Ask what you already know about this
- Skim organization
 - Introduction & conclusion
 - title, headings, & visuals
 - topic sentences



Active Reading Strategies

While You Read

- Divide into manageable 'chunks'
- Scan for specific information
- Read for main ideas
- Mark new words but don't stop
- Read a section before taking notes



Active Reading Strategies

After You Read

- Review notes:
 - Fill in gaps
 - Write questions
 - Write a summary sentence
- Transform notes
 - Flashcards
 - Mind maps
 - Practice questions



Finding Main Ideas

Finding Main Ideas

Where Are the Main Ideas?

- Title / Headings / Visuals
- Chapter introduction & conclusion
- Paragraph topic & concluding sentences
- Signal words (e.g., 'Most importantly,' 'To sum up,')
- Bold vocabulary

*Finished a section? Try to summarize the main idea(s) (speaking or writing) in one or two sentences.

Finding Main Ideas

Introduction

Language is clearly a factor which has two sides to it. The first is the fact that it is a second language for many students. The second is the fact that it is a second language for many students. It is the second of these issues with which this paper is concerned, reporting an empirical study of pupil performance carried out in Botswana and the UK.

A number of studies have looked at the role of language and the effect of wording in science examination questions. O'Donnell (1968) reviewed the role of language in a physics examination, while work by Cassels (1980) and Cassels and Johnstone (1978) focused on the language used in multiple-choice chemistry questions. The body of existing work has, however, centred almost exclusively on students whose first language is English. Other authors have discussed issues in teaching science in a second language, e.g., Strevens (1976), but this work has not addressed directly the issue of language in examination papers.

Work by Storey (1968), Cassels (1980) and Cassels and Johnstone (1978) has shown that the wording of examination questions can affect how candidates perform in tests. Cassels and Johnstone (1978) report on a study involving a total of about 8000 students in which they showed that performance on questions could be greatly improved by minor alterations to the wording.

A considerable body of work exists which addresses the issue of children's understanding of non-technical words in science, e.g., Gardner (1972), Cassels

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"two issues"
two sides to

First – sequence
adverb

Second
sequence a

Focuses on second issue
– main goal of paper

Direct reference to
purpose of paper

Finding Details

Finding Details

Where Are the Details?

- Look for signal words
- Signal words show how ideas relate:
 - Order or process ('First' 'Next')
 - Examples ('Such as' 'For instance')
 - Causes or effects ('Thus' 'Since')
 - Stronger statement ('Above all' 'In particular')
 - Similarity or difference ('Likewise' 'In contrast')
 - Opinions ('Personally' 'In my view')

*Keep [a list of signal words](#) (The Writing Center, 2023)



Looking for Signal Words

Atoms

Example of an atom

An atom is the smallest component of an element that retains all of the chemical properties of that element. **For example**, one hydrogen atom has all of the properties of the element hydrogen, such as it exists as a gas at room temperature, and it bonds with oxygen to form water. Molecules cannot be broken down into anything smaller than the particles that form them. If a hydrogen atom were broken down into its constituent parts, it would lose the properties of hydrogen.

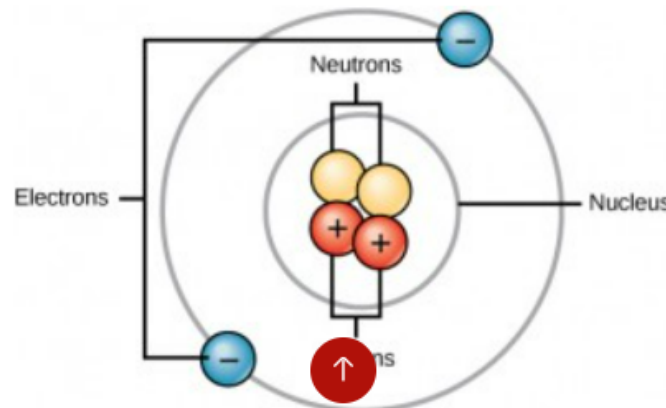
Summary statement

Example of previous noun (multicellular organism)

At the most basic level, all organisms are made of a combination of elements. They contain atoms that combine together to form molecules. In multicellular organisms, **such as** animals, molecules can interact to form cells that combine to form tissues, which make up organs. These tissues are the multicellular organisms are formed.

Simplified or additional explanation of previous point

Atoms are made of **protons**, and **neutrons**. The only exception is hydrogen (H), which has only one electron. A proton is a positively charged particle that resides in the nucleus (the center) of an atom and has a mass of 1 and a charge of +1. An electron is a negatively charged particle that travels in the space around the nucleus. **In other words**, it resides outside of the nucleus. It has a negligible mass and has a charge of -1.



New Vocabulary

New Vocabulary

- Mark new words but don't stop reading
 - Check later in your dictionary
- Decide if the word is important
 - High frequency (in textbook, lectures, slides)
 - Bold
 - In title, heading, introduction
 - Textbook glossary
- Keep lists of important words for review
 - Vocabulary.com helps build & practice lists

For vocabulary learning info, see
another MSS workshop:
[Vocabulary Learning & Practicing](#)

Vocabulary

Guessing without Checking Dictionary

(1) Look at the context

"To successfully CONVEY bad news, writers must carefully consider the audience, purpose, and context" (Guffey et al., p. 236).

- 'Convey' = communicate

(2) Look for a definition

"Rejecting REDUNDANCIES, expressions that repeat meaning or include unnecessary words are redundant" (Guffey et al., p. 147).

- 'Redundancy' = unnecessary or repeated words

(3) Ignore non-relevant words

"The subject matter of the report usually suggests the best way to divide or organize it. Abby Gabriel, an information specialist for a MARITIME health care consulting firm..." (Guffey et al., p. 376).

- 'Maritime' = adjective for sea/ocean
- Detail from an example = not relevant to main ideas

Taking Notes

Note-Taking

Some Useful Tips

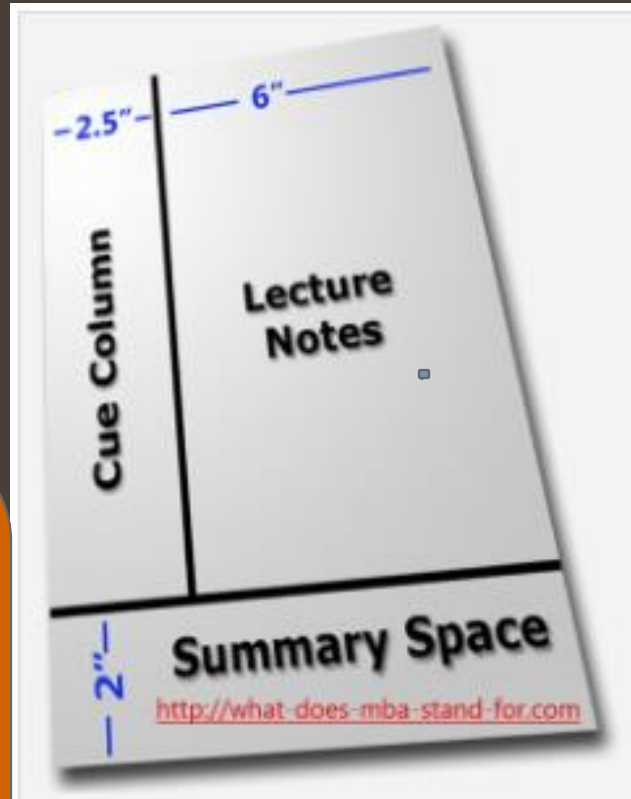
- Don't write too much: only main ideas & key details
- Wait till the END of a section before taking notes
- Use abbreviations and symbols to save time (&, =, re:, w/o)
- Use different colours (main ideas, details, vocabulary)
- Finished a section? Write a summary sentence with the main idea
- Finished a section? Skim it again to check for gaps in your understanding
- Reviewing for a test? Transform and reduce notes (into flashcards, a mind map, or practice questions)

See [MSS Note-taking Methods learning module](#) for more info!

Note-Taking Styles

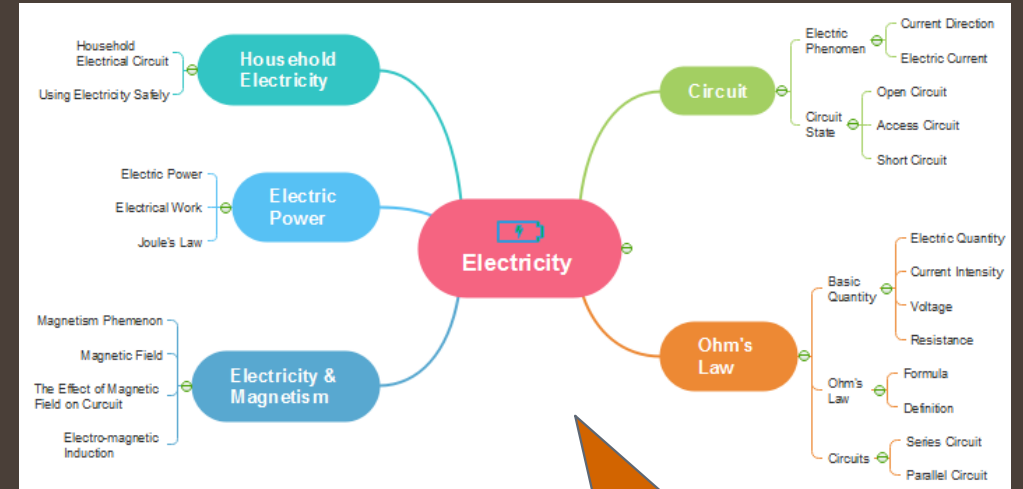
- Great for review later
- **Large section:** main ideas & key details
- **Cue column:** questions, vocabulary, ideas
- **Summary Space:** summarize main ideas in 1-2 sentences

CORNELL STYLE



Paul, n.d.

MIND MAP



Lynch, 2023

- Great for visualizing organization and systems
- Shows how ideas relate

Conclusion

- Successful readers use strategies:
 - Read with a purpose
 - Focus on understanding main ideas

(Chen & Intaraprasert, 2014)

- Read with an active mind
- Increase efficiency by reading smart
 - Know where to look for main ideas and key details
 - Take good notes
- Read assigned readings *before* lectures

Reading Resources

AT CAMOSUN

- Check out the ['READING' guide](#) in the Camosun Student Learning Success Guides.
- The Writing Centre helps with Reading Strategies. [Make an appointment with them.](#)

ONLINE

SPEED READING

-Sonia Millett's [4000 BNC Speed Readings for ESL Learners](#)

-[breakingnewsenglish.com](#)
(100s of short news stories – use the 'Listen 5-speed')

<http://www.cueprompter.com/> (copy-paste your reading content into a teleprompter for increasing speed)

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