Managing your reading load

Academic material is not meant to be read.
It is meant to be ransacked and pillaged for essential content.
(University of Canberra, 2008)

Some general reading tips:

- Set aside blocks of time to read (break blocks into small chunks (e.g. 25 mins)
- Set reading goals (SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-based)
- Read actively – take notes, make diagrams, ask questions, solve problems.

Key principles of academic reading

Be clear why you are reading – what do you want from the reading

Some purposes:

- get the main idea from the text
- understand a theory/concept
- search for specific facts
- evaluate the author’s arguments and evidence
- compare ideas with what other authors say
Choose a reading strategy that suits your reading purpose

Scan:
This strategy is used to identify what the text is generally about (topic) and its organisation/order of presentation.

- Use the abstract (journal article), title, book description (back cover) table of contents, to get a general idea of the text.
- Use headings, subheadings of major aspects of the topic that the text covers.
- Use any tables, graphs, diagrams, or other figures to get more information.

Skim:
This strategy is used to identify the main points that the writer is using, and the type(s) of evidence being used.

- Use the introduction and conclusion to identify the position presented or hypothesis being tested, or the problem being examined.
- Use topic sentences (opening sentence of paragraphs) to identify the way the argument is being developed, the main points being made, and the type of evidence being presented.

Slurp:
This strategy is used after you have identified the texts or ideas of that text that are relevant for your purpose.

- Read the selected texts or parts of the text intensively – taking notes and/or drawing mindmaps.

Summarise:
This strategy is used to review main points, arguments and evidence and to link ideas. This strategy can only be used after you have processed and understood the text's meaning.

Good academic readers:

- Have a purpose for reading
- Use the structural features of the book or article
- Use a variety of reading strategies
- Make their reading active
- Do not always read every word from start to finish