**Effective Reading;**

When studying, especially at higher levels, a great deal of time is spent reading.

Academic reading should not be seen as a passive activity, but an active process that leads to the development of learning.

Reading for learning requires a conscious effort to make links, understand opinions, research and apply what you learn to your studies.

This page covers the following areas: how reading develops, the goals of reading, approaching reading with the right attitude and developing a reading strategy.

Everything we read tells us something about the person who wrote it. Paying close attention to how and why the author writes something will open ourselves up to their perspective on life, which in turn enriches our understanding of the world we live in.

**How Reading Develops;**

Learning to read as a child usually results in the ability to read simple material relatively easily.

As we develop our skills in reading, the process often becomes more challenging. We are introduced to new vocabulary and more complex sentence structures. Early school textbooks offer us facts or ‘truths’ about the world which we are required to learn; we are not, at this stage encouraged to question the authority of the writers of these published materials.

As schooling progresses however, we are led to consider a range of perspectives, or ways of looking at a topic, rather than just one. We learn to compare these perspectives and begin to form opinions about them.

This change in reading from a surface approach (gathering facts) to a deep approach (interpreting) is essential in order to gain the most out of our studies.

Reading becomes not simply a way to see what is said but to recognise and interpret what is said, taking into account subtleties such as bias, assumptions and the perspectives of the author.

Academic reading, therefore, means understanding the author’s interpretation of reality, which may be very different from our own.

#### 8 Easy Steps To Effective Reading

If your students (or you yourself) have trouble reading effectively—if their eyes move over the right pages and paragraphs, but they then look blank when asked what the story was about—forget about “speed reading” and teach them active reading. Here are the key rules:

1. **Warm up your brain.** Nothing numbs comprehension like rushing through a to-do list at breakneck speed. Before starting your reading time, take a short break after the last task, and let your mind relax. Then, ask yourself: What do I already know about this text? What do I want to get from it (besides a passing grade)? How is the topic relevant to my life? Pick up the reading itself only after considering these questions.

2. **Sweep the chapter.** Call it “sweeping,” “skimming,” or “scanning”—but do a quick all-over preview before actually reading. Note what jumps out at your passing glance, especially anything that is visually emphasized; these are points to keep in mind as you read the passage thoroughly.

3. **Write as you read.** Whether directly in the book or on a separate tablet, underline or write down key points and what supports them. This not only ensures you won’t lose them entirely; the physical action of marking helps your brain store the information on the spot.

4. **Look up words you don’t understand.** Don’t (as Charles Schulz put it) “bleep right over” strange-to-you words, nor rely solely on context to decipher them; you may miss some important nuances. Many electronic files allow you to simply tap for on-the-fly definitions; otherwise, if you don’t want to interrupt reading flow by turning to a dictionary, add the word to your notes and mark it “look up as soon as possible.”

5. **Ask questions.** Consider: Why do things unfold as they do? What weaknesses does the hero have? Can you find points of empathy with the bad guys? (Even in nonfiction, there are “good guys” and “bad guys,” in the form of ideas that do or don’t support the author’s viewpoint.) Where do you agree or disagree with the points the author makes? Why?

6. **Look for answers**. Going beyond points 4 and 5, note what you already knew about the subject, what new facts or perspectives you have acquired, and what else you want to look up. Then, consider how all this will help you understand others and make your unique mark on the world.

7. **Turn chapter titles and headings into questions**. To maximize your learning experience, go over the reading once more, paying special attention to titles and other headings—and covering any additional questions these bring to mind. “Don’t Believe the Experts”—why? “Learn to Sew in Three Hours”—how?

8. **Understand what you are reading**. Finally, review your notes once more; schedule next steps in solving any still-unanswered questions; define in 100 words or less what the author intended and what you’ve learned—and pat yourself on the back for being an active reader!

**Technical Writing**

**Technical writing** is writing or drafting [technical communication](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Technical_communication) used in technical and occupational fields, such as [computer hardware](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Computer_hardware) and [software](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Software), [engineering](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Engineering), [chemistry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chemistry), [aeronautics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aeronautics), [robotics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robotics), [finance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Finance), [medical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medical), [consumer electronics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consumer_electronics), [biotechnology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biotechnology), and [forestry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forestry). Technical writing encompasses the largest sub-field within technical communication.

The [Society for Technical Communication](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Society_for_Technical_Communication) defines [technical communication](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Technical_communication) as any form of communication that exhibits one or more of the following characteristics: "(1) communicating about technical or specialized topics, such as computer applications, medical procedures, or environmental regulations; (2) communicating by using technology, such as web pages, help files, or social media sites; or (3) providing instructions about how to do something, regardless of how technical the task is".

The traditional definition of technical writing is:

Technical writing is the practice of documenting processes, such as software manuals or instructional materials. Traditionally, it was limited to user manuals of some sort.

## New Definition of Technical Writing

Today technical writing encompasses all documentation of complex technical processes. It includes reports, executive summary statements, briefs. Any time technical information is conveyed in writing at work, it is, by definition, technical writing.

This can include high-tech manufacturing, engineering, biotech, energy, aerospace, finance, IT, and global supply chain.

The format is no longer bound to lengthy user manuals. Technical information must be distilled and presented unambiguously. This can come in the form of technical reports, emails, policy, briefs, and press releases.

## Technical documents

Technical writing covers many genres and writing styles depending on the information and audience. Technical documents are not solely produced by technical writers. Almost anyone who works in a professional setting produces technical documents of some variety. Some examples of technical writing include:

* [**Instructions**](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/instruction) **and procedures** are documents that help either developers or end users operate or configure a device or program. Examples of instructional documents include [user manuals](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User_guide) and troubleshooting guides for computer programs, computer hardware, household products, medical equipment, mechanical products and automobiles.
* [**Proposals**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proposal_(business))**.** Most projects begin with a proposal—a document that describes the purpose of a project, the tasks that will be performed in the project, the methods used to complete the project, and finally the cost of the project. Proposals cover a wide range of subjects. For example, a technical writer may author a proposal that outlines how much it will cost to install a new computer system, a marketing professional may write a proposal with the product offerings and a teacher may write a proposal that outlines how a new biology class will be structured.
* [**Emails**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emails)**,** [**letters**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Letter_(message))**, and** [**memoranda**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Memorandum) are some of the most frequently written documents in a business. Letters and emails can be constructed with a variety of goals—some are usually aimed at simply communicating information while others are designed to persuade the recipient to accomplish a certain task. While letters are usually written to people outside of a company, [memoranda](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Memorandum) (memos) are documents written to other employees within the business.
* [**Press releases**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Press_releases)**.** When a company wants to publicly reveal a new product or service, they will have a technical writer author a [press release](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Press_release), a document that describes the product's functions and value to the public.
* [**Specifications**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Specification_(technical_standard)) are design outlines that describe the structure, parts, packaging, and delivery of an object or process in enough detail that another party can reconstruct it.For example, a technical writer might diagram and write the specifications for a smartphone or bicycle so that a manufacturer can produce the object.
* [**Descriptions**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Product_description) are shorter explanations of procedures and processes that help readers understand how something works. For example, a technical writer might author a document that shows the effects of greenhouse gases or demonstrates how the braking system on a bike functions.
* [**Résumés**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/R%C3%A9sum%C3%A9s) **and** [**job applications**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Job_applications) are another example of technical documents. They are documents that are used in a professional setting to inform readers of the author's credentials.
* [**Technical reports**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Technical_report) are written to provide readers with information, instructions, and analysis on tasks. Reports come in many forms. For example, a technical writer might evaluate a building that is for sale and produce a trip report that highlights his or her findings and whether or not he or she believes the building should be purchased. Another writer who works for a non-profit company may publish an evaluation report that shows the findings of the company's research into air pollution.
* [**Case study**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Case_study) is a published report about a person, group, or situation that has been studied over time; *also* : a situation in real life that can be looked at or studied to learn about something. For example, an individual's challenging situation at his or her workplace and how he or she resolved it is a case study.
* [**White papers**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_papers) are documents that are written for experts in a field and typically describe a solution to a technological or business challenge or problem. Examples of white papers include a piece that details how to make a business stand out in the market or a piece explaining how to prevent cyber-attacks on businesses.
* [**Websites**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Website)**.** The advent of hypertext has changed the way documents are read, organized, and accessed. Technical writers of today are often responsible for authoring pages on websites like "About Us" pages or product pages and are expected to be proficient in web development tools.
* [**Datasheets**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datasheet) are the document that summarize the features, key specifications, technical characteristics, application circuits and some other important information about the product, machine, equipment, software, application, system in brief.
* **API guides** are written for the developer community and are used to explain the [application programming interfaces](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Application_programming_interface).
* **Help systems** are online help centres that provide users with technical information about products and services. They provide content as web pages that are viewed in a browser. The content may be created in help centre software, such as [Zendesk](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zendesk), or in [help authoring tools](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help_authoring_tool) or [component content management systems](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Component_content_management_system) that can create a help centre as an HTML output.