

Critical Reading Strategies

Critical Reading: What Is It?

“Critical reading is a complex thinking technique that involves discovering and taking apart an author’s meaning, evaluating the author’s meanings based on established standards, and incorporating the meaning into the ideas you already know.”

Janet Nay Zadina, et al., *College Reading: The Science and Strategies of Expert Readers* (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2014), 8.

Critical Reading ...

- 1) is intentional
- 2) requires focus and concentration
- 3) involves thinking, understanding, interpretation, and reflection

Active Reading

A “Conversation” Between Author and Reader

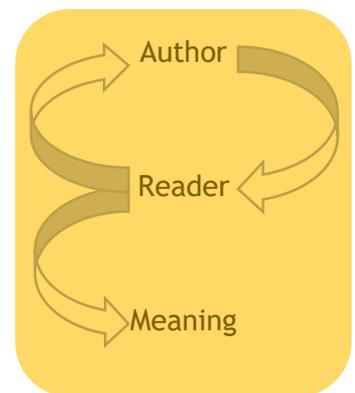
Author: The author communicates ideas to the reader.

Reader: The reader engages the author’s ideas to generate meaning.

Strategies for Active Reading

Concentration

- **Learning Environment:** Create a quiet and clean space for reading.
- **Schedule:** Create a specific, daily reading plan.
- **Reflection:** How can you minimize your internal and external distractors?
- **Preparation:** Identify ways in which the reading is relevant.



Habits

- **Skimming:** Preview the text to estimate the time it will take complete the reading.
- **Rereading:** Reread difficult sentences for comprehension.
- **Vocabulary:** Build your vocabulary by using a dictionary and flash card for new words.
- **Subvocalization:** Read the text out loud.
- **Pacing:** Place your fingers or a bookmark under the line of the text.
- **Textbook Marking:** Underline, highlight, and annotate to identify key ideas.
- **Review:** Review the text to reinforce key ideas and the “big” picture.

Textbooks and Authors

Understanding a Textbook

Title Page: Provides basic information about the book (e.g., title, author, publisher, publication date).

Table of Contents: Details section and chapter titles.

About the Author: Offers information about the author’s background, research, and research interests.

Preface/Introduction: Gives an overview of the book.

Chapters: Develop the topic of the book with specific information.

Appendices: Provide additional information on specific topics in the chapters.

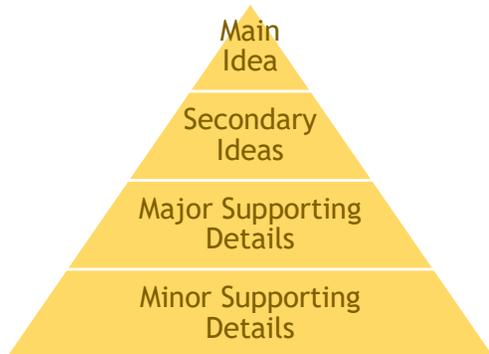
Glossary: Lists definitions for key terms in the chapters.

Bibliography: Lists the sources the authors used to research the book.

Index: Lists important terms and topics in alphabetical order.

Understanding an Author

The Structure of Academic Writing



Patterns of Academic Writing

Pattern	Definition	Word Clues
Listing	Placing items in order	first, second, third
Analysis	Breaking large topic into pieces	properties, components
Cause/Effect	Identifying reasons and results	because, if ... then
Compare/Contrast	Finding similarities and differences	however, on the other hand, similarly

The Preview-Read-Review Reading System

Step 1: Preview

Skim: Examine sub-headings and introduction

Question: Develop preview questions about the topic

Keywords: Circle keywords (in bold or italic type)

Knowledge: Recall prior knowledge

Step 2: Read

Study-Read

Read each sub-section at a time

Look up unfamiliar words

Rephrase the section in your own words

Compare information with prior knowledge

Answer preview questions; ask new questions

Mark the Text

Highlight the main idea in a specific color

Highlight major supporting ideas in a new color

Circle specialized vocabulary words

Use symbols (MI = Main Idea; 1, 2, 3 ...)

Write key words or phrases to summarize sections

Draw a chart or graph to illustrate an argument

Step 3: Review

Main Idea: Return to the main idea (what has the chapter argued?)

Scan: Scan each subheading to review the supporting details

Questions: Review and answer all of your reading questions

Reorganize: Organize the material in your own way for retrieval

Resources

Gardner, John N., and Betsy O. Barefoot. *Your College Experience: Strategies for Success*. 13th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2018.

Gore, Paul A., et al. *Connections: Empowering College and Career Success*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2016.

Zadina, Janet Nay, et al. *College Reading: The Science and Strategies of Expert Readers*. Boston: Cengage Learning, 2014.