

Pre-reading (Surveying) your academic text

Just like it would seem silly in a text message to write out “laugh out loud,” so too are there expectations in academic texts about what should be included and how they should be presented.

Now, it’s your turn to take on the challenge! Make sense of this text by using your background knowledge on the subject matter along with the reading strategies you have been practicing since the beginning of the course.

1. In scanning the text, what do you expect the main topics and ideas will be? What clues make you say so?
2. What is the structure of this text? Is it written in sections? Are there headings and subheadings? How is it organized? What does this organization suggest to you as a reader?
3. Where was this text published? Can you infer anything based on this information? How could you find out about this publisher or about the journal?
4. What kind of audience does this author seem to be expecting?
5. What is the author’s own field of study? Besides the author’s own academic field, are there researchers in any other fields who might be interested in this research?
6. What do you already know about this subject matter that might help you understand the article?
7. Are there any images, tables, or charts that are labeled as “figures”? If your text has none, work with someone who does have figures in his or her article; find where in the body of the article those figures are referenced. What seems to be the purpose of labeling “figures” this way? Do the figures seem to enhance the information provided in the article in any way? Why do you think the author wanted to include them?
8. Go back to the abstract and read it all the way through. This can help you focus on main ideas when you are reading. Are there any unfamiliar words in the abstract that seem key to understanding the text? If so, circle them in the abstract; then look them up in the dictionary and write the definitions in the margin of your text. Do any of the unfamiliar words seem to be specialized vocabulary for the field of study that your article comes from? If you were assigned this text for a class, what other reading strategies besides consulting a dictionary might you use to understand the jargon?
9. **Compare your scholarly article to those articles found by a few of your peers. What are some of the features of these academic articles that seem different from other written genres with which you are familiar? What information do these features communicate? Why would this information be important and useful for an audience of people doing research?**

Talking with your text...

Don't just think your thoughts; write them down. The annotations you make are the visible signs of your thoughtfulness. The prompts below will encourage certain kinds of annotations, but don't limit yourself to those. *Show off a little bit, why don't you?*

For each prompt below, there are directions for how to mark up your text and then a follow-up question that ask you to talk with your text next to the parts that you marked. Based on the understandings you gained from your pre-reading, do a 2nd read and make your marks and notes first (including your self-directed ones!). Then go back, and respond to each of the follow-up questions.

3rd read:

- Highlight a few spots where the author makes claims that seem central to his or her argument; then summarize those spots in the margin. What is the main idea of this text? Paraphrase it in the margin.
- Using a highlighter, mark a few different spots where the author is providing evidence for main claims, and comment on (talk with the text/annotate) the **significance** in the margin. What kinds of evidence seem to be valued in this field of study?
- Underline sections where you are confused or where you have questions for the author; express your confusion or question in the margin. **What steps could you take to sort out this confusion or get answers to your questions? (write out your steps)**
- Note examples, if there are any, of specialized vocabulary—words that seem specific to this field. What can you infer about this author's intended audience based on the use of these key words? (write out what you infer)
- Note at least three spots where you have trouble understanding the text because you lack some background knowledge (besides specialized vocabulary), and explain next to the word or phrase, as best you can, what type of information you seem to be lacking. Alternatively, if, because of your expertise in the subject matter, you fully understand every section of the text, **then note three spots** where comprehension depends on background knowledge that less expert readers might lack.