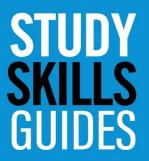# Tips for reading online

STUDY SKILLS GUIDES

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When reading online, you can still apply the same active reading techniques to ensure you get the most for your studies. You might just need to make a few adjustments to help.

Avoid distractions

It sounds simple but avoiding distractions can make online reading more productive. When reading on screen we can be tempted to follow links, look up a cited article or deviate off task. Shut other programmes down while you are trying to read or use website blockers like Cold Turkey or StayFocused to stop you from surfing the net.

Be prepared to take notes

Knowing why you are reading the document makes a big difference, for example is it wider reading to help you understand a topic, research to provide supporting evidence to an argument or an introduction before a lecture to get an idea about what will be discussed. Once you know why you are reading, you can apply the right techniques. See Study Skills Guides: Reading for academic purposes for more information about critical reading techniques.

Whatever your reason for reading, have paper and pen or a blank Word document ready to make notes. You could use the Cornell method or your preferred method, but make sure you are reading actively: identifying key points, summarising content in your own words and asking questions about the text.

Set a time limit

Reading from a screen for long periods of time can cause eye strain. Plan to read in short intervals, for example read for 30 mins then take a 10-minute break. During this break, get up, move about and look into the distance to allow your eyes to relax.

Clear things out regularly

Doing this, you can quickly accumulate a lot of documents, pdfs, bookmarks, and saved items. Regular maintenance can make it much easier to find what you are looking for, when you are looking for it. So, clear out your bookmarks, delete PDFs that you don't need or add key references you want to keep into Endnote or Zotero libraries so you can access them later. See Endnote or Zotero online training guides for more info about managing your references.

Save documents into a different format

Consider saving or downloading documents into a format you can add notes to like PDF or word documents. Highlight or add comments and questions to enable active reading using apps like Xodo.

Apps to help online reading and note taking:

- **Evernote** is a useful tool to store notes, images, web links. The free version is usually enough for most people but the web clipper add-on can be used to clip articles or chunks of information that you find online. Your Evernote is searchable too so you can find information you have saved quickly and easily.

- **Pocket** can be used to save items you want to read for later, for example, if you are reading a journal and want to read a cited journal you can send the link to your pocket to read at another time.

- **Google Keep** allows you to make notes, audio recordings, save images and create to-do-lists which could be useful to create digital notes.

- **Xodo** that lets you annotate, highlight and add images to pdf documents and work with other people on the same document. Xodo works on desktop, mobile and online.

- **ATbar** is a browser tool that can help you customise how you interact with online material like ebooks.