

## Reading Tips

How to be more efficient in reading the literature? Students often tell me they search the literature for inspiration when they get stuck in the writing process. This might give you a boost, but perhaps you have also experienced how it can confuse, distract, and intimidate you to a point you have no idea how to go on. *That is because 'free reading' prevents focusing.* The mind wanders off in ideas and concepts of others, and your own storyline gets foggier instead of sharper.

The following tips are essential for effective reading:

### 1 Before you pick up an article, formulate READING QUESTIONS

Never start reading an article without noting your search questions. Why am I reading this? What do I hope to find? What question do I need to be answered? It can also be helpful to allow yourself only 7 minutes to search in the article (set an alarm). The sharper the focus, the sooner you know where to search in the article (so avoid reading it entirely) and when to stop and to dismiss it if you find out the answer is not there.

### 2 Set up a table or use Mendeley or Scrivener to immediately categorize what you have found

The column headings show the questions/topics/concepts you are mining the literature for. The row headings show your sources. In the cells, you note in short the messages - ideas - sentences you want to retain. That way, you have an overview of your findings.