

# Stage 3

## **Making reading more manageable**

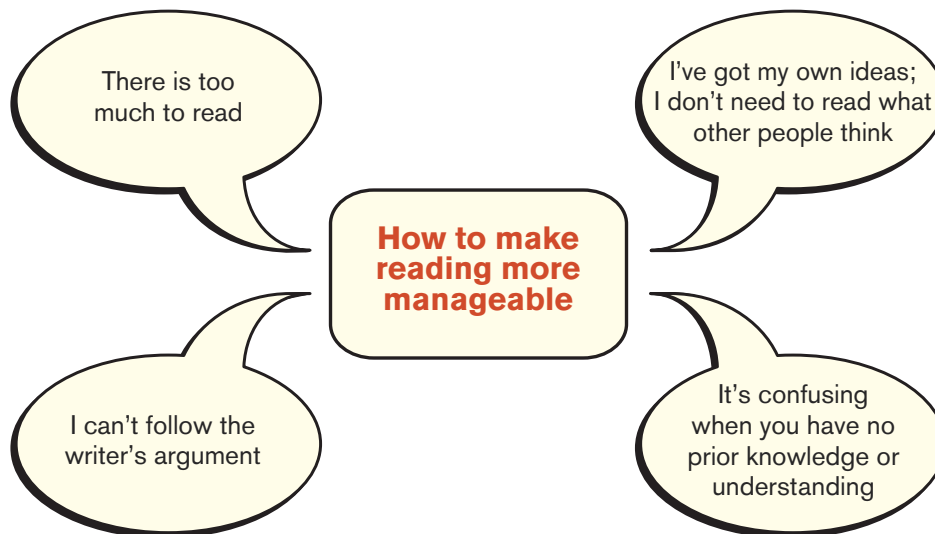




This section will help to:

- Make reading easier to manage
- Improve note making skills by trying different strategies

## Reading for your assignment



### Reading for your assignment is essential

- to show that you are aware of current academic thinking about your topic
- to find evidence to support your ideas.

First you need to have a general overview and then find information directly related to your task.

Don't believe everything you read; you need to question what you are reading.

#### Identify why you are reading

- Is it for an assignment? For an exam?
- Think about the assignment title and decide what you want to find out. You'll find it helpful to write down the specific questions you need the answers to.
- You may be starting from scratch or filling in gaps in your knowledge.

## Useful techniques

- Skimming: when you read just enough to understand what the text is about
- Scanning: when you look for a particular word or piece of information
- SQ3R is a useful approach to try (see page 29).

## Getting started

- A list of questions that you need answers to, will help you to stay focussed.
- Get an overview: read a basic introduction to the topic or a section on the topic in a general textbook
- Find specific information in books by checking the contents page, the index, the summaries, the headings and subheadings.
- Skim read without making notes to get a basic understanding.
- The first sentence of each paragraph usually indicates the point made. This is a good way of following the author's argument.

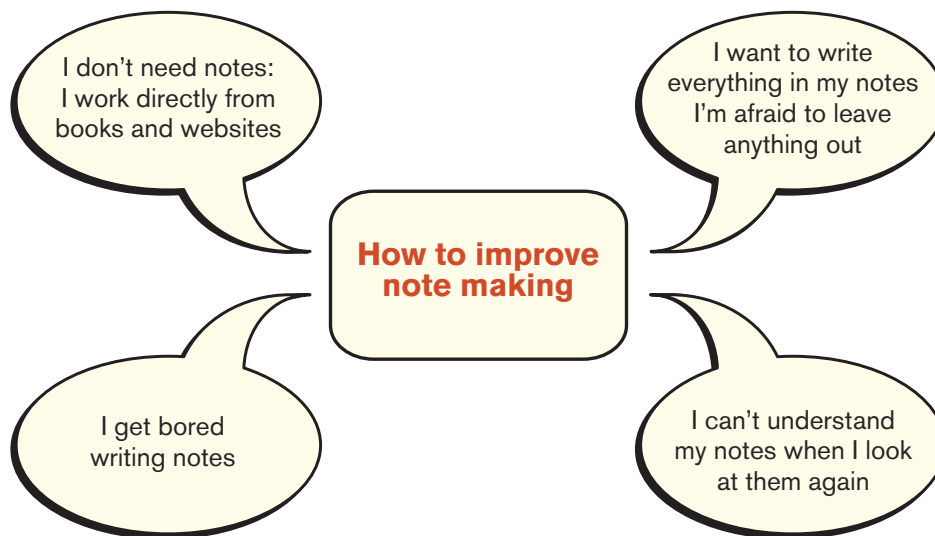
## Make it easier

- Don't attempt to read all texts; choose 3 to start with and then decide what else you need to look at.
- Print or photocopy chapters or articles and highlight or underline points. Colour code points so that they link with your assignment plan.
- Read small chunks at a time and make notes on what you remember.
- Use a dictionary to look up words you do not understand.
- Start writing up your first draft before you have finished your reading. This will help you to see where the gaps are and where you need to focus your reading.

## Top Tips:

- *Introductions and conclusions to chapters provide summaries of the writer's key ideas.*
- *Take a break; pause, think and absorb what you have read.*

## Note making



## Good note making

- **reduces** the amount of information you have to deal with. Your notes should include main points and some examples or evidence.
- **helps** you to process, organise and understand information. You can use notes as the basis for your revision. You can summarise them further.
- **gives** you practice in writing in your own words. This will help you to avoid plagiarism (copying).

<http://www.library.dmu.ac.uk/Images/Howto/HowtoAvoidPlagiarism.pdf>

### Notes from reading

- Always record full reference details of the source at the beginning of your notes. See the Harvard guide <http://www.library.dmu.ac.uk/Images/Selfstudy/Harvard.pdf>
- Choose a method that suits your 'learning style' and your needs. Linear notes may suit you (see page 30). Also try spider diagrams (see page 31) or column notes (see page 32).
- You could start by underlining and highlighting on print outs or photocopies.
- Identify direct "quotations" by writing in a different colour.
- Use abbreviations.
- Leave spaces in your notes, you might want to add something later.

### Lecture notes

- Prepare for a lecture by referring to your course or module handbook.
- Add your own notes to the handout (use a separate piece of paper if necessary).
- Column notes may be suitable for a lecture. Have a look at the example on page 32.
- Ask the lecturer if you can record the lecture and make notes later.
- Reread your notes as soon as possible after the lecture and make any necessary alterations.

### Revision notes

- Make cue cards which include just key words and brief phrases.
- Mind maps or spider diagrams are particularly useful for revision. You'll find an example on page 31.
- A diagram allows you to summarise a lot of information on one page.

### Top Tips:

- Notes should be set out clearly so that you can easily find and use the information later.
- You must have references for your notes, otherwise you cannot use them.

## SQ3R

**Survey, Question, Read, Recall, Review**

**This is a really effective way of coping with academic reading – try it!**

### Survey

A quick look, to see if it appears useful.  
Scan contents, index, first and last chapters  
to get a general idea of what the text  
is about.

### Question

Is this text going to be useful and relevant  
to your assignment?

### Read

Read short sections and vary your speed.  
Read aloud when text is hard to understand.

### Recall

Note down the main points and important  
facts and opinions in the text.

### Review

Reread the text to check you haven't  
missed anything.  
Complete your notes

## Linear notes

Always start with the reference details of your source. Make a note of page numbers in the margin.

### Headings

#### Subheadings

- Bullet points
- Start a new line for each point
- Leave space around each point – you may want to add something later

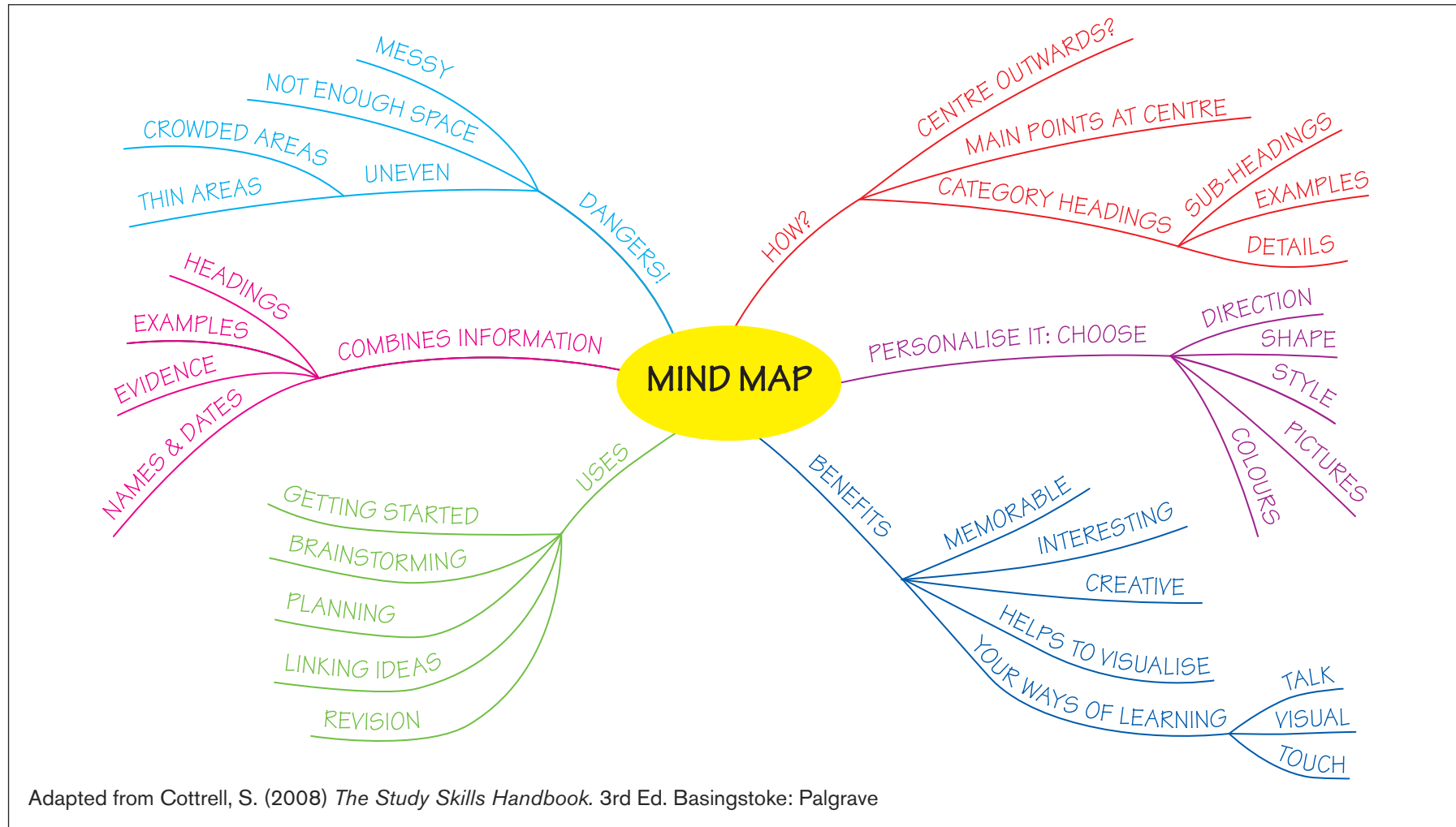
#### Remember

- Write in your own words
- Indicate quotations “when copying another writer’s words” (author, date, page number)
- Use abbreviations whenever possible



## Mind maps

Pattern notes or mind maps can be particularly helpful when you're developing your ideas and planning your assignment. You can see your ideas and how they're linked together. Make it even more helpful by using colour and images!



## Column notes

Particularly useful for taking notes in lectures

Key words	Notes	Comments
Main topics	Subheadings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>underline</u> or <b>highlight</b> important points</li> <li>• identify argument, evidence, opinion</li> <li>• summarise in your own words</li> </ul>	Your questions about the content.  What do you disagree with, or are not convinced about?  Is there anything you don't understand and need to look up later?