

## Critical Questions for Proactive Reading

Reading in an academic context requires much more than simply running over a page or highlighting passages that seem important. Proactive reading practices require us to ask critical questions of the text we are engaging and building a conversation between ourselves and the author. This can be initiated by asking questions of the texts we read, rather than simply assuming positive answers to such questions, as we often do when reading passively. Some of these questions may require you to search for information, using a tool like Google; other questions can only be answered after you read the text itself. It is useful, however, to read these questions prior to reading and having them in mind as you explore the text. The questions can provide a guide to more active reading practices.

Here are some initial questions you can consider as you engage a text:

Who is the author?

- Are they a credible expert in this area?

What is the author's area of specialization?

- How does this relate to the claims made in the written work you have just read?

In what context has this been written and published (i.e., is it published in a scholarly journal, is it a book chapter, has it been written in response to a particular theme, etc.)?

What is the thesis, and what claims are made to support that thesis?

Are the thesis and claims specific or general?

Is the thesis based on, and supported by evidence and/or sound argumentation?

Is the support varied?

- Is the support contextually appropriate?
- Is the support convincing?

How does the author attempt to support their claim?

- What kind of persuasive language does the author use?

Would you come to a similar conclusion as the author?

- Can you see the conclusion as (at least) valid and well-supported? Why or why not?