

# READING AND LISTENING CRITICALLY

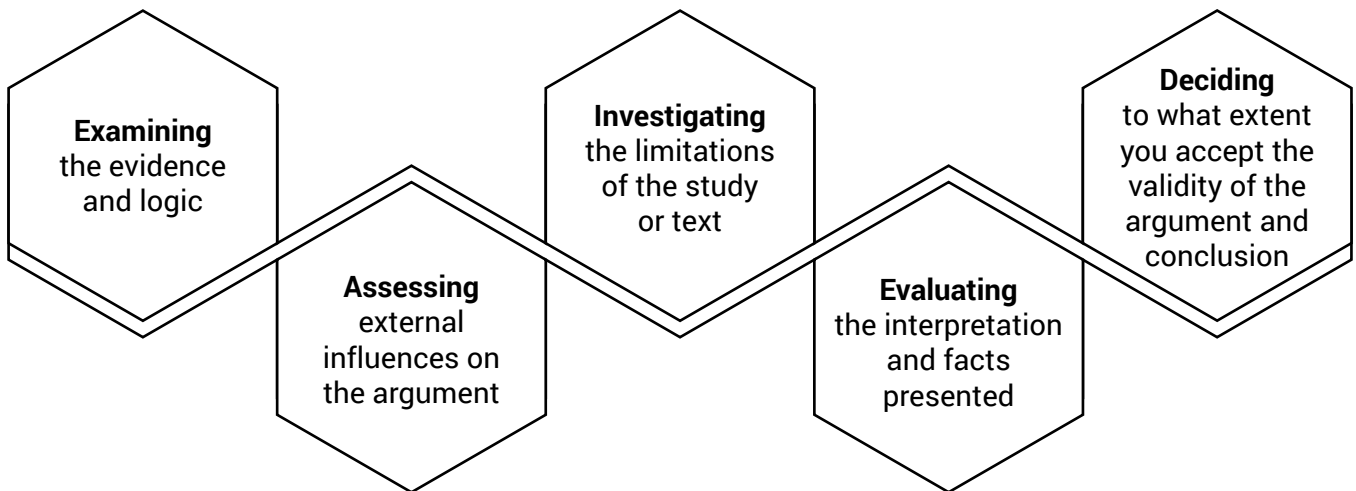


Critical reading and listening are activities that require communicators to **move beyond superficial engagement** and **analysis** with a text or speaker. This handout is designed to explain the benefits of developing critical reading and listening skills, and it provides concrete strategies you can use in the classroom or during research.

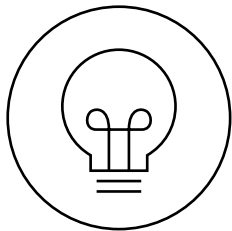


## Critical Reading

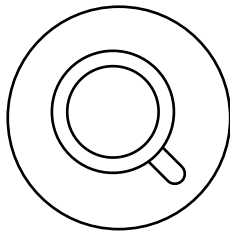
Critical reading is an important activity in **evaluating** written arguments. It helps with the following activities:



While many people undertake reading as a passive activity (by simply scanning the text), you can get more from your readings when you **actively engage** with the presented material. Critical reading offers the following benefits:



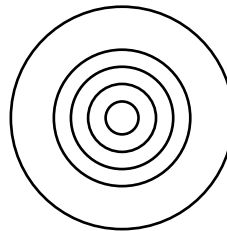
It promotes **comprehension** and **absorption** of material.



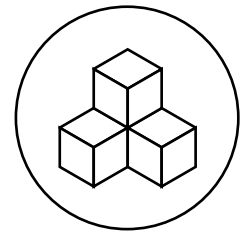
It provides a **context** for facts, events, and people.



It ensures that knowledge is judged on its **merits**.



It improves **concentration**.



It demonstrates your ability to perform an **essential academic skill**.

## Passive Reading vs. Critical (Active) Reading

	Passive Reading	Active Reading
	Basic grasp of text	Judgments about how a text works
	Absorbing Understanding	Analyzing Interpreting Evaluating
<b>Focus</b>	What a text says	What a text does and means
	<p>What information does the text have?</p> <p>What information can I get out of the text?</p>	<p>How does the text work?</p> <p>How is it argued?</p> <p>What choices does the author make?</p> <p>What patterns are present?</p> <p>What kinds of reasoning and evidence are used?</p> <p>What are the underlying assumptions?</p> <p>What does the text mean?</p>
<b>Direction</b>	Accepting the text	Challenging the text
<b>Purpose</b>	Restatement Summary	Description Interpretation Evaluation

(Adapted from The Writing Centre, University of Toronto)

## Steps in Critical Reading

### 1 Skimming

- **Review** text prior to class
- Look at **key words, titles, headings, phrases, dates, and places**

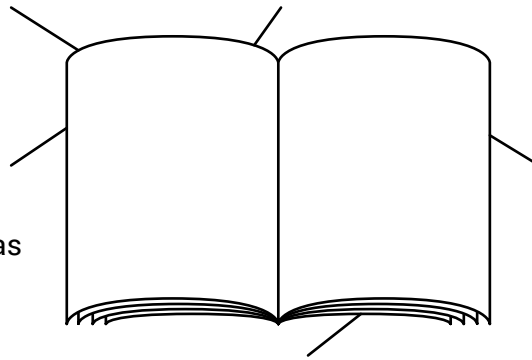
### 2 Annotating

- **Read actively:** talk back to the text
- Write **notes** in the margins
- **Underline** important ideas

- **Highlight** memorable images
- Mark **thesis** and **key words**
- Underline **sources**
- Identify **confusing sections**

### 5 Re-reading

- First reading: **skim** for main ideas
- Second reading: **reflect** on text
- Third reading: **answer** questions



### 3 Summarizing

- **Paraphrase** the overall idea
- Select **key words** from the text
- Outline the writer's **argument(s)**

### 4 Analyzing

- Determine the overall **meaning** of the text
- Consider whether and how **evidence** relates to the overall message

- **Evaluate** the significance of the evidence
- Pair your **analysis** with **examples/evidence**
- Judge the **credibility** of the text and its author(s)

## Critical Listening

It is as important to listen critically as it is to read critically. Critical listening is a process for **understanding** what is said and **evaluating, judging**, and forming an **opinion** on what you hear. The listener **assesses** the strengths and weaknesses of the content, **agrees** or **disagrees** with the information, and **analyzes** and **synthesizes** material.

### Critical Listening Strategies



- Find **areas of interest** in the material you're listening to
- Reserve judgment: recognize your **emotional biases**
- Work at listening: **mentally summarize** and **review** what is being said, **organize** information, and find **connections** to what you already know
- Avoid **distractions** (internal or external)
- Listen for and note **main ideas**; focus on **central themes**