

Three domains of critical reading

Reviewing the literature and critiquing scholarship

	Validity: On its own terms	Synthesis: In relation to others	Relevance: Usefulness to you
Context: discipline/profession, authors, currency, bias	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When was it published?• Where was it published?• What profession or discipline are the authors?• What else have they published—are they authoritative?• Are there any vested interests which might bias research?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have others cited or drawn on this research?• How influential has it been?• Is it cutting edge/controversial or mainstream?• Is this part of a debate and where does it sit?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are these authors coming at the issue from the same discipline perspective as you?• What is your overall response to the article?
What are they doing? Research Question/Aims/Hypothesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are the aims clearly stated? Are they vague?• Is the research question etc valid or rests on bias/assumptions?• Is the question interesting/significant?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is this a radically new area of research or a tweak or new angle on existing question or topic?• How long have people been interested in this topic?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How similar are their aims to your own? How does that affect your use of it?• Is it still worth me doing my research?
How did they do it? Methods, Models and Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are any theories/models appropriate and accurately understood? Do they develop their own?• Are the methods used for data gathering/interpretation appropriate?• Is the data set well chosen?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are they developing a completely new method etc?• Are the methods etc used standard and acceptable practice?• Are they adapting or improving previous methods etc?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does this help me justify my own choice of approach?• Can I adapt or improve their method?• Do I agree that this is an appropriate method for research like mine?
How do they know? Argument, evidence, logic and reasoning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is their interpretation and analysis flawed or does it make logical sense?• Have they missed anything?• Do the results mean what they say they mean?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do they use other literature appropriately to help interpret their findings?• Do later scholars criticise them?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is there anything I should be watching out for when reading my own work critically?• Is there anything I can point to in order to save me having to explain it in full?
What do they say? Findings and conclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are the conclusions actually related to their aims and results?• Are the conclusions drawn proportionate to the evidence presented?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are their findings confirmed by other literature?• Are their findings significant and novel, compared to other literature?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can I rely on their conclusions to build my own argument?• Do I disagree with their conclusions to some extent? Does that help justify my research?• Any gaps/missed opportunities to help justify my research?

Interrogate the text as you read - on its own terms, in relation to other texts, and its relevance to your work.

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What are they doing? Research Question/Aims/Hypothesis			
How did they do it? Methods, Models and Materials			
How do they know? Argument, evidence, logic and reasoning			
What do they say? Findings and conclusions			

