Before setting out, be clear what your purpose is. What are the questions you want to answer? What do you need to clarify? Make a short list and keep it with you.

**Before reading**
- Is it out-of-date?
- Is it on the reading list?
- Does it have the information you want?
- Quickly check the contents page and the index - you might only need a small part of the book.

**Take down the details**
- Author, title, year of publication, publisher and so on.
- Write down the library classmark so you can find it again.

**Check out the contents page**
- Which chapters or sections are likely to have what you want?
- Mark the pages temporarily (sticky notes are less likely to fall out).

**✓ Read the introduction or preface**
- This can be a good way of establishing the author's main ideas.
- Usually authors give signposts to the most important parts of their writing.
- Make a note of any key quotations (with the page number).

**✓ Skip to the end and read the conclusion**
- This should help you confirm what the author's main ideas are.
- Again make a note of any key quotations.

**✓ Summarise the key ideas in your own words.**

**✓ Go back to the contents page**
- Decide whether you need to read any more of the book.

**Check the index for other relevant material**
- You might go back to these bits later if you have time, so make a note of the pages.

**If you decide to read more**
- Skim through the sections you marked.
- Look for section headings.
- Read first and last paragraphs.
- Look out for any diagrams or illustrations.
- Keep your key questions in mind.