

Using a book

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.

1

Before reading

- Is it out-of-date?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

Ditch 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).



2

Concentrate on beginnings and endings

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.

Ditch the book?



3

If you decide to read more

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.

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.